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No. 114

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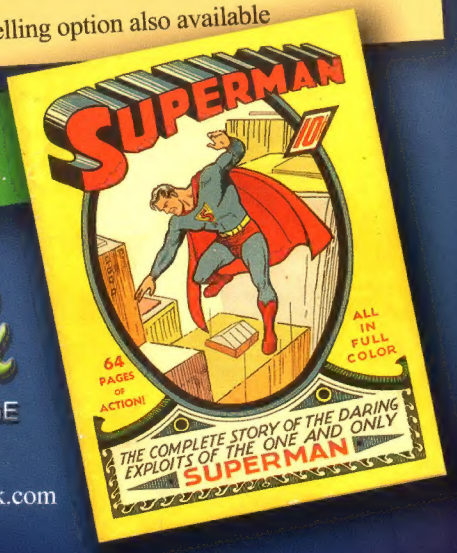

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Vol. 3 No. 114

August 2004

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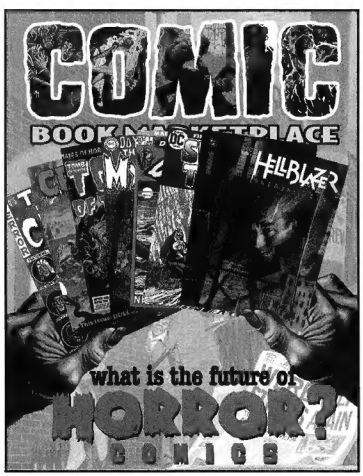

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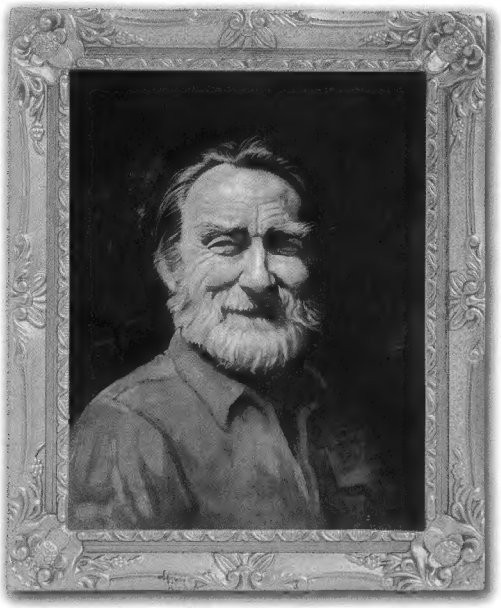

Horror Stories are for Children

Long before comic books appeared on the newsstand, there has been a discussion about what effect scary stories have on children. Some scary stories are told to children as a warning—like the little boy who cried "wolf!" who got his comeuppance by being eaten by the wolf. The story of the three little pigs, the story of Red Riding Hood were intended to teach kids a lesson by scaring the pants off them.

When I was a Boy Scout, we loved to sit around a crackling fire at night and listen to scary stories our scoutmaster told. Sometimes he would even arrange to have something scary come out of the dark woods at just the right time in the story. We were scared silly, and we loved it.

Some parents think that seeing a movie like *Frankenstein* or *Dracula* might have a negative or upsetting effect on young children, but when I was a kid, my brothers and I loved these movies over all others. They *did* scare us—and we loved it!

The whole circus-like affair of the Senate Subcommittee hearings trying to connect the rise in juvenile delinquency to horror and crime comic books made the same point: while many "responsible" adults were horrified by what they found in EC comics, and worried that these horror stories might turn their children into murdering lunatics, at the very same time the kids that were actually reading these comics were loving them.

Then, of course, after all comic books were whitewashed by the new Comics Code in 1955, and all you could find on the newsstand was Disney and Archie comics and the like (not that there's anything *wrong* with those comics), did juvenile delinquency statistics show any improvements in the situation? Nope.

And now, with the resurgence of horror stories in comic books, and with independent publishers like Dark Horse putting out horror stories that are not subject to Code approval, the lid to Pandora's Box is wide open and the beneficiaries are the readers of comics who can now decide what they want to read, with no censorship committee sitting between the creators and the readers. Which is, to my way of thinking, the way it should be.

Russ

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President and Chief Executive Officer

JOHN K. SNYDER, JR.
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RUSS COCHRAN
Editor & Publisher

J.C. VAUGHN
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ARNOLD T. BLUMBERG
East Coast Editor

MICHAEL KRONENBERG
Art Director and Cover Designer

BILL BAKER
WILL MURRAY
MICHELLE NOLAN
MARK SQUIREK
MIKE WILBUR
Contributors

PRICING & MARKET REPORTS
ROBERT M. OVERSTREET
Senior Pricing Editor

MICHAEL NAIMAN
Market Reports Editor
mnaiman1@cox.net

MARK HUESMAN
Pricing Coordinator
feedback@gemstonepub.com

ADVERTISING
ANGELA MEYER
Traffic & Operations Manager
ec@gemstonepub.com
Toll Free (800) 322-7978

BRENDA BUSICK
Creative Director
bbrenda@gemstonepub.com

RESEARCH
JOE McGUCKIN
mjoe@diamondgalleries.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE & ADMINISTRATION
JUDY GOODWIN
Customer Service Manager
cbm@gemstonepub.com
Toll Free (800) 322-7978
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Marketplace Mail

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More Gulacy

Before there was Catwoman, there was...the Black Widow! At least so far as Paul Gulacy is concerned anyway. I read with interest Michael Kronenberg's interview with Gulacy in *CBM* #111 and because the artist has always been one of my all time favorites (although he's been slipping in recent years) I couldn't help noticing that not only were some key Gulacy works omitted from the checklist, but perhaps the apex of his career as an artist, possibly his single greatest work, was not only left off the checklist, but not even mentioned in the interview! Of course, I'm talking about Gulacy's incredible turn at the Black Widow in *Bizarre Adventures* #25 written by Ralph Macchio. As great as this espionage thriller is, it's made even better by Paul's use of the likenesses of Humphrey Bogart and Michael Caine...just don't know what came over Mr. Kronenberg that he forgot about this masterpiece...unless he didn't know about it in the first place, in which case, he's got the delight of a new Gulacy discovery in his future!

Also not mentioned on the checklist is an early Master of Kung Fu story by Gulacy in *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu* #3 as well as Gulacy's last great contribution to Marvel Comics in *Marvel Comics Presents* #26-35 with the character of Coldblood that he did with Doug Moench. And last but not least, was Paul's first collaboration with Moench on the Dark Knight in *Batman* #393-394...easily as good as "Prey" if not better!

Pierre Comtois
via e-mail

Well, Pierre...I am *familiar with Paul's Black Widow story in* Bizarre Adventures *#25. It's a great piece—as for it being the "apex" of his career, that is a matter of opinion. The same could be said regarding* Batman *#393-394 and "Prey" (*Legends of the Dark Knight *#11-15). I love both, but I feel, along with many others that "Prey" is not only Paul's finest work on Batman, but possibly one of the best story arcs in the character's history. My interview with Paul was intended to largely cover his more recent work, that being obvious since I only touched upon his most noted work, Master of Kung Fu, very briefly. If you would like to read an extensive interview with Paul, discussing his entire career (including his "apex"* Bizarre Adventures *#25) then pick up the book I'm working on with Vanguard Productions* Spies, Vixens and Masters of Kung Fu: The Art of Paul Gulacy. *Regarding Dave Lemieiux's Gulacy index, it is obviously abbreviated and I mistakenly should have noted this. Due to space limitations I couldn't include the entire index, so all of Paul's magazine work had to be left off, along with other listings. To see a complete version of Dave's index go to www.gulacy.com. It's an excellent site dedicated to Paul's art and news about his upcoming work. There too, you will find a complete reprinting of Paul's Black Widow story in* Bizarre Adventures *#25. Finally, addressing your statement that Paul's work has been "slipping in recent years"—I couldn't disagree more, his work in* Catwoman *has been outstanding and issue #30 of that comic is one of the finest single issues of his career, go check it out.*

Michael Kronenberg

True, but weird

I enjoyed John R. Stuart's celebration of *Weird Mystery Tales*, took me back to a favorite of mine. In his checklist John wonders if the cover to #10 is by Jess Jodloman. Actually, that issue, as well as the covers of 11, 15 and 19 (which he showed), are all by Luis Dominguez. You can spot his initials at the bottom of both 15 and 19. After Adams and then Cardy, Dominguez came over to DC from Western/Gold Key Comics and became the leading cover artist for their mystery line. I had the good fortune to meet him on Friday, September 13, 2002 at the Big Apple Comic Show, where after all these years Luis finally got to shake hands with Dick Ayers, with whom he had collaborated amongst others on Scalphunter in *Weird Western Tales*.

I have a few clarifications and comments on Steve Kronenberg's gloriously gory horror comics cover survey. I thought the cover artist on those gruesome *Weird Mysteries* issues from Gilmore (or should that be Gillmore or Gilmor, can anyone confirm please?) is not Byron Bailey but Bernard Baily (without the 'e'), co-creator of The Spectre with Jerry Siegel.

And two comments on the covers Steve showed. He didn't point out that a cog, screw and nut are flying out of the bursting face on Lee Elias's cover to *Tomb of Terror* #15. These telling details were maybe intended to lessen the shock and mitigate any complaints, especially because I believe the twist ending of the story inside reveals that the man is actually a robot. As for seeing a "city block" background on Don Heck's *Horrific* #7 cover, it looks to me much more like the barred windows of a prison

block, an apt setting for an execution.

On the subject of the word "Weird," Chris Bonham repeats the truism that "American comics were still prevented from using the word 'Weird' on comic book covers by order of the Comics Code Authority." I'd heard that before, but when I checked the text of the Code, "Weird" is not mentioned at all. Only "Horror" and "Terror" are forbidden for use in any comic book title, while "Crime" cannot appear alone on a cover or larger than the others words in a title.

Still, it is true that the title "Weird" did disappear completely from comic book covers, and not just at EC, once the Code was implemented. The word only resurfaced briefly in 1959 thanks to Joe Simon and Martin Bursten, whose Pastime Publications published a single issue of *Weird Mysteries* as a pioneering black-and-white horror magazine, thereby avoiding the Code. Michael Gilbert and Jim Simon have unearthed the secrets behind this recently in *Alter Ego* #31, 32 and 36. Then in 1966, after the success of Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie* magazines, Eerie Publications (no relation) unveiled their first low-budget imitation, simply called *Weird*.

As for Code-approved comic books, it would not be until after some slight relaxations in the Code in early 1971 that the word "Weird" would be revived in force by DC. Their "Weird Age" spread from *Weird Mystery Tales* to *Weird War Tales*, *Weird Western Tales*, *Weird Worlds*, even *Weird Adventure Comics* when The Spectre became the lead feature. Marvel weighed in with *Weird Wonder Tales* in 1973, followed by Atlas/Seaboard in 1975 with *Weird Suspense* and the magazine *Weird Tales of the Macabre*.

Finally, it's worth remembering that the root of these "Weird" comic titles is the outstanding horror pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, the grand-daddy of them all. Weird but true!

Paul Gravett
London England

Wow. What a weird *letter! I must admit that I have always liked the word "weird." To remember how to spell it I had to visualize a logo from* Weird Science *to make sure I got the "e" before the "i." Arthur Godfrey used to sing a song about "The Man with the Weird Beard." And around town here I am known as a weird-o!*

RC

Another Haney heard from

Tony Gleeson recently sent me a copy of *Comic Book Marketplace* #95. In which his article "The Facts in the Case of R.L. Haney" appeared.

Although, back before he pitched it to you, I was aware that he was thinking of doing something along this line I hadn't actually seen a copy of the book (mag) until he sent me a copy a week or so ago.

I would like you and your staff to know that I was very pleased with the overall design and layout of the article. Everything about its presentation swam well—the type, inserts, layout, all quite eye appealing (considering the Subjects of the subject matter). Tony tells me that your staff put it together and he, his very own self, was quite elated with how it was presented.

I may be too modest (or too old) to comment on the content of the article. As Mr. H. Finn might've said "He told the truth...mainly."

In addition I found all the other articles most interesting and also well laid-out. The R.C. Harvey on our old friend Mr. Toad was excellent. (Alas my copy of the Rackham *WIW* was lost to water damage years ago.) It was nice to revisit those illustrations once again. The Alberto Becattini coverage of the Disney strips was also of the first water.

Well, it has been a pleasure E-Jawin' on you but it's time to fade back into the Shadows once again…. I do hope to hear from you.

By the bye, this e-address is connected to my website for searching out-of-print books. I haven't the resources to list inventory at this time, but do offer a Free Search Service…. Does this sound like a Blatant Aggrandizement and Plug? (You bet it does). If you list an address please let people know they can reach me—if anyone but creditors are interested in doing so—through the website.

Sincerely,

R.L. Haney
www.thedansker.com

"The Facts in the Case of R. L. Haney" was certainly one of our more unusual articles. After we ran it we heard from a different R.L. Haney, but it's good to hear from the real thing! Thanks!

RC

Every day in every way...

Most of the previous letters I've written to *CBM* that have been published have all had some complaint or another in them and I'm not stopping now. But I did want to say that the last four issues (107, 108, 109, 110) have been so darn good that I just had to tell you. Good work! In fact, dare I say almost perfect? It appears you are on the right track as you cautiously predict in your editorial in #110. And I waited so long to send this that #112 just arrived. I don't know what to say. It's simply fantastic. The color plates, the articles, the focus on severed heads; I'm in heaven (or possibly a little further south). I'm getting that old *CBM* feeling again when that white envelope arrives. Though I greatly appreciate the refocus on comic books and comic creators, I also applaud the emphasis on pulp illustrators. I think the connection is palpable. I wonder if many other *CBM* readers are as captivated by the pulps. It seems like an untapped trove of history. I wanted to weigh in on the marketplace sections. Don't get rid of them. It's always great to hear what the market trends are, even if it's not comprehensive. Michael Naiman's report is always a must read. I just read issue 111 and agree with his opinions and analysis on the proposed changes to *CBM*. Don't change the name. It's a good name. It's your brand. Don't mess with a basically successful formula. If you want a model for a magazine that

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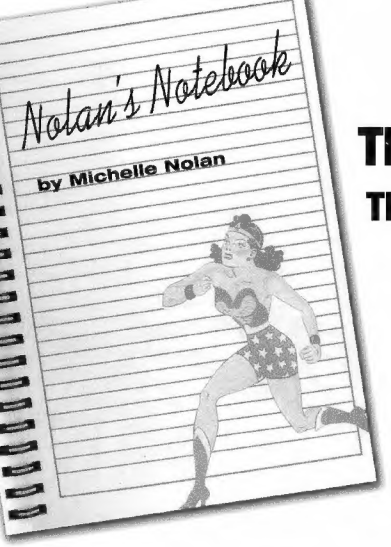


The First Marvel Implosion

The Unique Aspects of Timely's 1950 Output

No comic book company has ever had a year quite like Timely/Marvel endured in 1950, yet this period remains largely misunderstood and unexplored.

In 1950, Marvel should have been at the absolute top of its game. For the first time, publisher Martin Goodman's company led the industry in issues published in 1949, a full decade after Timely, as it was then known, began to publish comics. It had been a long, tough climb.

Accounts of the period vary, but everyone agrees on one point: For one reason or another, near the end of 1949 and continuing into 1950, Goodman released most of the staff and required Editor Stan Lee to rely primarily on a heavy stockpile of inventory art along with freelance submissions.

The result: Marvel went from publishing 272 issues with 1949 dates to 186 issues with 1950 dates. (Please note: do not confuse the terms "issues" with "titles." As a writer, this drives me crazy! I see this all the time, sometimes lifted from my own work.) In other words, Marvel's output shrunk by one-third, a substantial cutback in anyone's book.

Why? One big reason: By 1950, Marvel had dispensed with its once-and-future iconic super-heroes, not to mention a multitude of other characters, yet failed either to create or license other popular figures. We'll explore that in greater detail, but first we need to submit a few more figures, especially since they are key to understanding the forces that resulted in Marvel's temporary cutback.

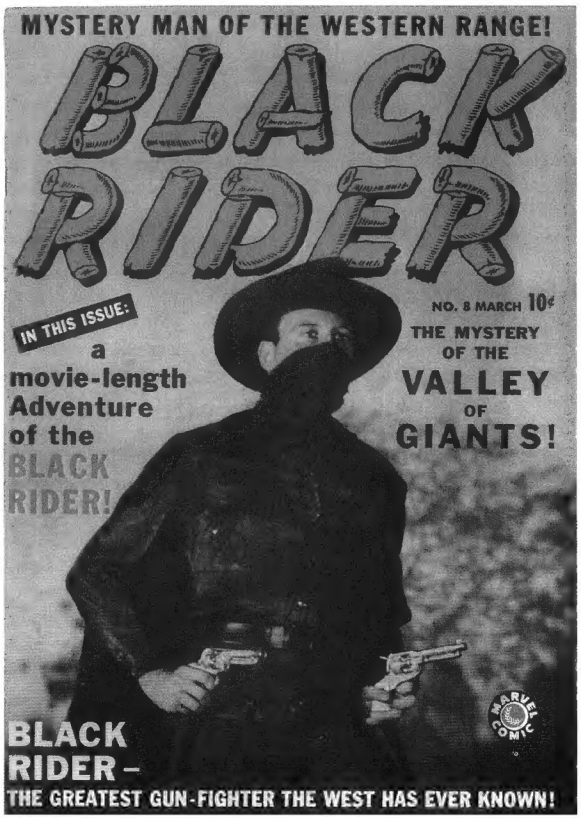
Marvel's 1950 woes were nowhere near as dramatic as the infamous 1958 implosion, which resulted in Marvel temporarily being cut to eight issues per month beginning late in the year. In 1958, Marvel published 96 issues; in 1956, under the Atlas imprint, the company produced 431 issues. That was Marvel's high-water mark through its first three decades.

Even so, Marvel in 1950 endured a surprisingly difficult period, especially considering how the other giants of the industry at that time—National (DC), Dell and Fawcett—continued to prosper. All three of those companies, however, still enjoyed icon-inspired sales, whereas Marvel's comic books must have seemed awfully obscure in comparison.

In some respects, Marvel also was hurt by the mushrooming growth in comic books following the end of World War II paper restrictions. That growth hit a snag in 1950, a year in which the industry stagnated. The situation was far from dire—a record 2,282 newsstand comic books were produced with 1950 dates (thanks to Dan Stevenson for the use of his monumental database). However, this represented virtually no growth over the 1949 total of 2,253 issues.

The industry resumed its growth in 1951-52—in large part, thanks to Marvel's resurgence under the Atlas banner, but that's a story for another time—before comic books began a steady decline that lasted for the rest of the 1950s.

Marvel's decline in 1950 was not only pronounced but unique—the company produced an astounding 86 different titles among its 186 issues! Only 40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Stan Lee poses for **Black Rider** #8 (Mar 1950), first issue with new title.

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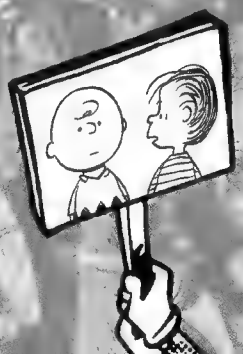

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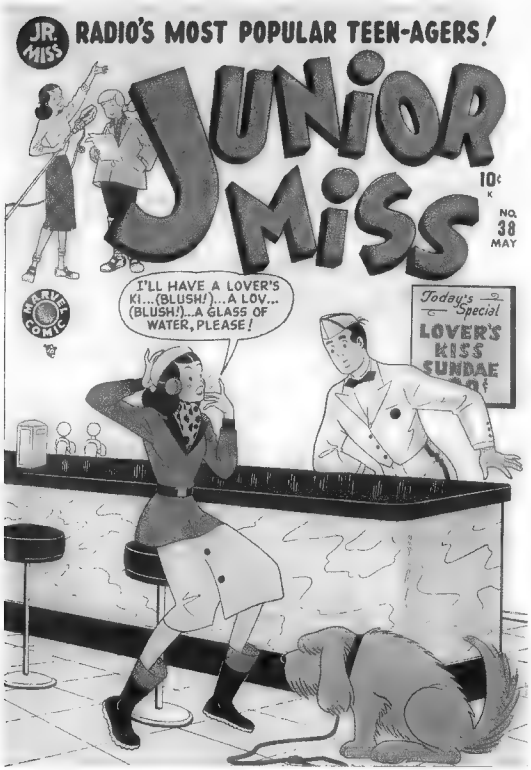
titles, however, continued into 1951, including 13 titles introduced in the final four months of 1950. This was a turnover frenzy unlike any in comic book history to that point.

In 1950, Marvel's best-known surviving characters were Patsy Walker and Millie the Model, both of whom continued on to considerable success for many years. That year, however, Marvel published only one comic book that ran as many as seven issues—*Miss America*, starring Patsy Walker, Vol. 7 #30-36 (let's ignore the convoluted numbering system, because it would take too long to explain). Patsy Walker's own title ran six issues, #26-31, and *Millie the Model* ran five issues, #21-25.

As hard as it might seem to believe, the only other Marvel title that ran as many as five issues in 1950 was *All-True Crime*, with #37-41. The rest of Marvel's 86 titles were quarterly at best.

During this same period, DC, Dell and Fawcett all produced a bundle of highly successful monthly and bimonthly titles. The difference, of course, is that the vast majority of these titles involved the exploits of multi-media characters well known to the American public, be they super-heroes, funny animals or cowboys.



#3 (Apr 1958), radio show adaptation.

In contrast, Marvel had to make do almost entirely with characters created exclusively for comic books or with short-story anthology titles without regular characters. This formula worked much better by the end of 1951, when the fabled Atlas logo began to appear regularly on the covers, but the method apparently caused problems in the 1949-50 period.

Looking at the list of those 86 Marvel titles in 1950 is a study in stunning anonymity. Only six had any connection with film, radio or television, and only one succeeded—*My Friend Irma*, which was blessed with Dan DeCarlo's art in the early 1950s before he went over to Archie Publications on a fulltime basis.

My Friend Irma began with #3 (Jun 1950) and lasted through #48 (Feb 1955). *My Friend Irma* was based on a huge radio favorite, a classic "dumb blonde" series starring a wacky secretary and her circle. Marie Wilson originated the role on radio in 1947 and also portrayed Irma Peterson on television in 1952-54 and in the movies *My Friend Irma* in 1949 and *My Friend Irma Goes West* in 1950. Those two comedies are better known today as the first film vehicles for Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis.

My Friend Irma, though, was as good as it got for Marvel in 1950 with regard to "names." That year, the company published three issues devoted to Monogram western players *Whip Wilson* (#9-11) and cowgirl *Reno Browne* (#50-52), along with the final issues adapting the radio programs *Casey-Crime Photographer* (#4) and *Junior Miss* (#38-39). The 1950 issues of *Suspense* (#2-5) also were adapted from radio, but without continuing characters.

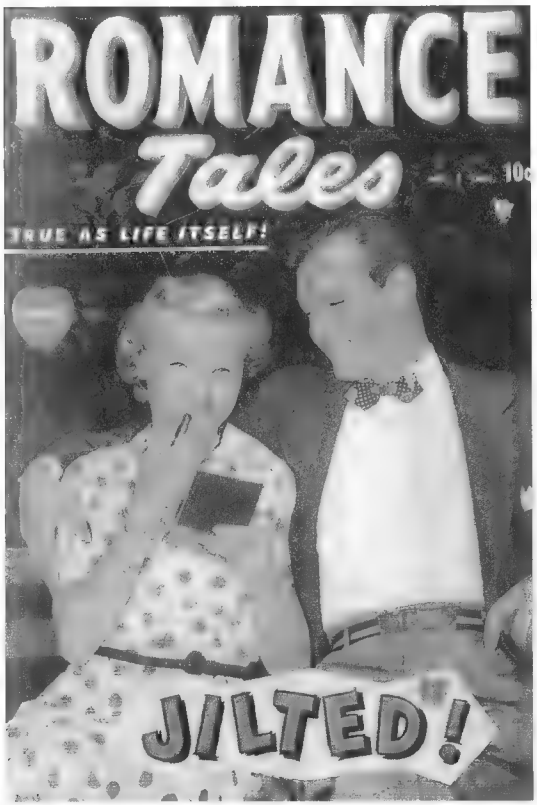
Has any large comic book company ever produced so many relatively unsung characters than Marvel did in 1950? In addition to Patsy, Millie and Irma, these were the characters that had their own titles for at least one issue that year: Apache Kid, Black Rider, Blaze the Wonder Collie, Casey-Crime Photographer, Cindy Smith, Georgie, Gunhawk, Hedy of Hollywood, The Kellys, Kent Blake in *Spy Cases*, Kid Colt, Little Lana, Little Lizzie, Marvel Boy, Nellie the Nurse, Reno Browne, Rex Hart, Tex Morgan, Tex Taylor, Venus, Whip Wilson, Willie and Wonder Duck.

For a couple of years, Marvel already had occasionally tried convincing the public that some of its western characters were adapted from films, creating posed photo covers. The situation reached its apex (?) when a masked Stan Lee heroically posed for a photo cover of the first issue of *Black Rider* (#8, Feb 1950). What other comic book editor could, or

would, have done that?!

Eventually, Marvel's policy of adapting to whatever was hot in the market—ranging from humor to horror—paid off nicely in the 1951-57 period before the implosion. But in 1949 and 1950, one such aspect of that policy—the decision to flood the market with romance titles—backfired big time on the company. In fairness to Marvel, the same situation plagued Fox and Quality, but not to the extent that Marvel suffered.

Romance comics took well over a year to catch on following the groundbreaking appearance of Simon & Kirby's *Young Romance* #1 (Sep/Oct 1947). In fact, other than teen humor titles, it wasn't until *Young Romance* #6 (Aug 1948) hit the stands that competition appeared in the romance comic book field.



#8 (Jan 1950), one of 30 Marvel romance titles of the period.

That competition came in the form of Marvel's *My Romance* #1 (Aug 1948)—which changed its title to *My Own Romance* with #4 (Mar 1949)—quickly followed by the debuts of Fox's *My Life* #4 (Sep 1948) and Fawcett's *Sweethearts* #68 (Oct 1948), which was formerly *Captain Midnight*!

Sales of those four love titles must have impressed the

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industry, though, since by the end of 1949, there were no fewer than 120 romance titles, including 27 from Marvel! All but three of those 27 titles made it into 1950, with Marvel adding four more short-lived romance titles and changing the names of two others.

Altogether, in the first four months of 1950, Marvel published at least one issue of the utterly mind-boggling total of 30 different romance titles! All but five of these titles, though, were gone by April 1950 after brief shelf-lives of from one to four issues. The five survivors emerged with four issues apiece in 1950—*My Own Romance*, *Lovers*, *Love Romances*, *Love Tales* and *Girl Comics*. However, *Girl Comics* soon became a hybrid romance/adventure title for a few issues before morphing back into a full-fledged romance title when it became *Girl Confessions* with #13.

By the way, it should be noted there was never a "Boy Confessions" or "Men's Confessions" title from any company. The title *Girl Confessions* says it all about the classic double standard, doesn't it?

It's interesting to note that other than *Girl Comics*, the other survivors of the 1950 romance purge were Marvel's first four love titles, all established in the first half of 1949 before the

Rare one-shot, even though it says #25 (Jan 50), with Virginia Mayo.

field exploded. That shows there was a method to Marvel's madness—stick with what readers might recognize best.

There may have been a 31st Marvel romance title in 1950, but at this point it seems doubtful that *Love Trails* #2 exists, even though it's still listed in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*. *Love Trails* #1 (Dec 1949) appears to have been a one-shot, possibly because Ace Publications beat Marvel to the stands with its first issue of *Western Love Trails* (#7, Nov 1949, continued from *Western Adventures*).

In fact, the western romance title field was so limited that Marvel's *Cowgirl Romances* #28 (Jan 1950) was the only issue of that title, apparently in part because Fiction House came up with the same title at about the same time.

The roll call of Marvel's 25 failed 1950 romance titles has an almost poetically haunting effect when they're rattled off: *May Love*, *Best Love*, *Our Love*, *Actual Romances*, *Love Adventures*, *Love Dramas*, *Love Secrets*, *Romance Tales*, *True Life Tales*, *Cowboy Romances*, *Faithful*, *Love Classics*, *Loveland*, *Young Hearts*, *Romances of the West*, *My Diary*, *Romance Diary*, *Rangeland Love*, *Western Life Romances*, *Cowgirl Romances*, *Cupid*, *Honeymoon*, *Real Experiences*, *True Secrets* and *Romantic Affairs* (which itself was a one-shot continued from *Molly Manton's Romances*).

In 1951, when Marvel had begun to regain its financial footing, the company resumed publishing *True Secrets* and *Love Adventures* to go with its five surviving romance titles.

In contrast to the dozens of 1950 offerings from DC, Dell, Archie and Harvey that survived the formation of the Comics Code Authority in 1954, it's intriguing to see how few of Marvel's 86 titles in 1950 survived into 1957 (remember, 46 of those titles didn't even make it into 1951). Aside from Marvel's four original romance titles, it's a short list indeed: *Journey Into Unknown Worlds*, *Kid Colt*, *Marvel Tales*, *Millie the Model*, *Miss America*, *Patsy Walker*, *Two Gun Western*, *War Comics* and *Wild Western*.

That's it—only 13 Marvel titles that lasted from 1950 to 1957. And of those, only six survived the 1957 implosion—*My Own Romance*, *Love Romances*, *Kid Colt*, *Millie the Model*, *Miss America* and *Patsy Walker* (Marvel's other ten post-implosion bi-monthly titles began after 1950). In retrospect, no Silver Age company had less tradition or baggage than Marvel did when Stan Lee began to co-create or revive its super-heroes in the 1961-63 period.

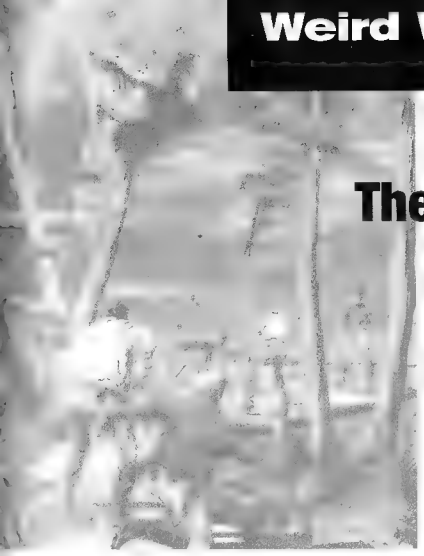
It's also instructive to note that all six of those titles go back to the 1940s, meaning that Marvel created and/or licensed very little of an enduring nature during the early 1950s. That makes the accomplishments of the 1960s that much more remarkable.

Part of this is nicely detailed in an amusing, informative book entitled *Stan Lee and the Rise and Fall of the American Comic Book* by Jordan Raphael and Tom Spurgeon (2003, Chicago Review Press). It's a fun read, and a pretty good overview of the industry, though it did contribute to the myth that Marvel was much more productive than it actually was with the following paragraph in the misleading chapter title "The Biggest Comic-Book Company in North America":

"By starting Atlas News Company (in the 1950-51 period following the breakup of the fulltime staff), which was anchored in part by the eighty-two monthly titles that Stan Lee and the boys were producing in the comic book division, Goodman could increase profits by eliminating the middlemen (distributors). He could also respond much more rapidly to evolving trends and sales figures."

Maybe so, but in those days, Marvel never even came close to producing 82 comics in any one month, much less 82 monthly titles. Even in its peak year of the 1939-69 period—1956, with its 431 issues—Marvel averaged "only" 36 issues per month.

As for being the biggest comic book company through most of the 1950s until the 1957 implosion, I would bet the farm that both Dell and DC, which produced nearly as many issues as Marvel in those years, had significantly better overall sales than Marvel did. The 1960s, though, would prove to be another story.



by Pat Calhoun

The Creepy Classics

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore...

Part of what makes great literature great is its rediscovery by generation after generation—amazed to hear voices from the "dead" past speak so clearly. The rendering of classic short stories into comics form is a rich vein that has brought treasured tales to a new audience. The horror and fantasy genres in particular have produced many memorable adaptations of yarns written back in the days (before "the pulp ghetto") when such stories were mainstream and penned by writers like Washington Irving, Robert Louis Stevenson, Ambrose Bierce, and the author of our epigraph (the opening lines of "The Raven"), Edgar Allan Poe.

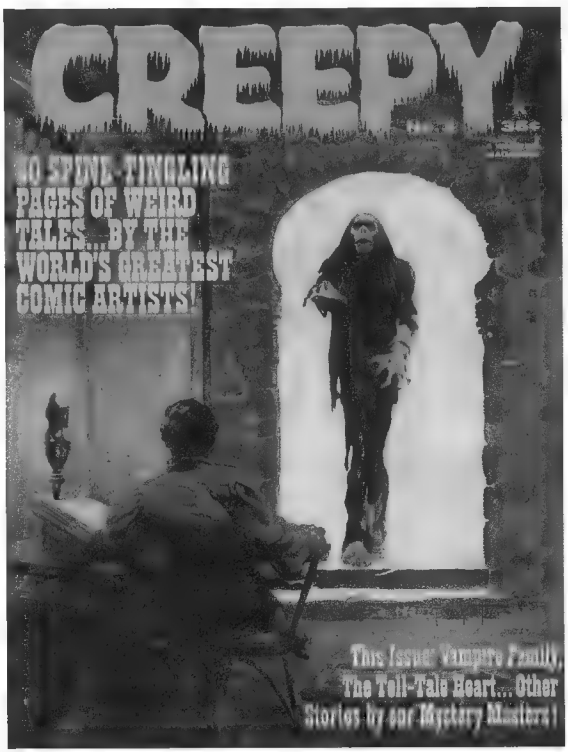
Let's look at some prime examples of classic horror adaptations, a series from the Silver Age when the restrictions of the Comics Code Authority made that genre difficult to develop. James Warren started *Creepy* in 1964 as an oversized black-and-white magazine—circumventing the Code—and gave readers (I was one) a chance to experience some lurid "lore" decked out in graphic glory. It seemed inevitable that this return to the sacred genre would soon inspire adaptations of the legendary weirdies by the 19th-century writers who created modern fantasy. Warren made this reality in *Creepy* #3 (1965, stated as the first of a series) featuring Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." It was an auspicious choice as Poe would prove to be the lead story source for the series, and the team of Archie Goodwin as adapter and Reed Crandall as illustrator went on to produce most of them as well as original work for Warren.

In this first Creepy Classic Goodwin set his precedent of embellishing the plots with new twists that were always consistent with the original, so that even the most rabid purists couldn't help but approve. Crandall's style was well-suited to the atmosphere of the classics, and his fine line work shines in every panel. Issue 3 is the last issue to list Russ Jones as editor, but it's quite possible that the series was Jones's idea—for reasons we'll come to shortly.

Creepy #4 (1965) offered "The Damned Thing" adapted from the Ambrose Bierce classic by Goodwin and the aptly-named Gray Morrow. Archie's script paves the way for a potent graphic ending, and Morrow delivers it with art full of tone and texture.

Issue 5 (Oct 1965) adapted a spooky tale by the author best known for his 1897 novel, *Dracula*, Bram Stoker. "The Judge's House" was tautly translated by Goodwin and Crandall. And *Creepy* #6 (Dec 1965) contained the second Poe adaptation, "The Cask of Amontillado," another fine Goodwin/Crandall job. The same team collaborated on Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Body Snatcher" in the next issue (#7 Feb 1966).

Number 11 (Oct 1966) was a banner ish, highlighted by the third and final Poe, Goodwin and Crandall classic, "Hop Frog." Crandall's mastery of the period piece coupled superbly with Goodwin's nicely heroic interpretation. And #13 (Feb 1967) has another Bram



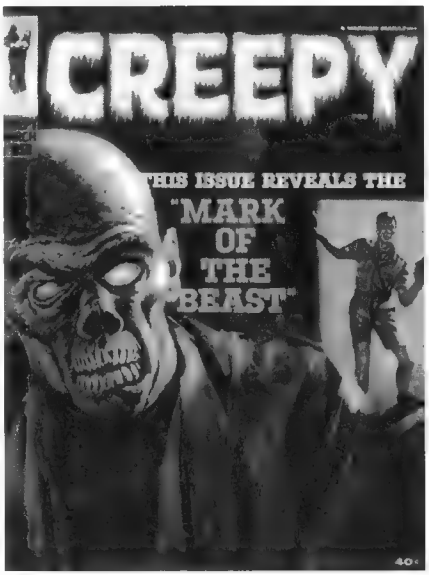
Creepy #3 (1965) Among the many right moves Warren made launching **Creepy**, getting Frank Frazetta as cover artist ranks high on the list. And the first Creepy Classic got a blurb on the front as well: Poe, Goodwin and Crandall's "The Tell-Tale Heart."

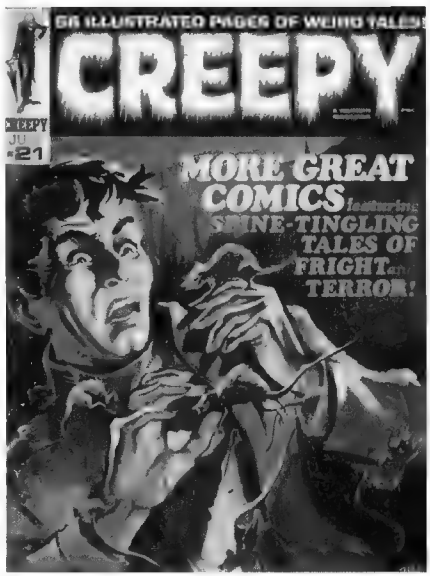
LAST NIGHT--TERRIBLY SIMPLE! AT EITHER END OF THE SCALE ARE NOTES THAT CANNOT BE HEARD BY THE HUMAN EAR... AS SOMETIMES USED BY BIRDS AS SIGNALS OF WARNING..."
SIMULTANEOUSLY AT AN APPROACHING SHIP? SAILORS KNOW... THE VIBRATIONS GO THROUGH A SHIP LIKE A BASS ORGAN NOTE SOUNDED IN A CHURCH!"
"AS WITH SOUNDS, SO WITH COLORS... AT EACH END OF THE SPECTRUM CHEMISTS CAN DETECT 'ACTINIC' RAYS--COLORS AN IMPERFECT INSTRUMENT LIKE THE HUMAN EYE CANNOT DISCERN... I'M NOT MAD-- THERE ARE COLORS WE CANNOT SEE!"
"... AND, LORD HELP ME, THE DAMNED THING IS SUCH A COLOR!!"
BLEEUF!
24

Creepy #4 (1965) Gray Morrow adds the perfect visual touches to the narrator's musings on the invisible monster terrorizing his town in "The Damned Thing," adapted from the Ambrose Bierce story by Archie Goodwin.

Creepy #11 (Oct 1966) Reed Crandall's incomparable line work—at its most captivating in the sumptuous full-page splash panel for "Hop Frog"—gives a great look to this sterling adaptation (Goodwin script) of Edgar Allan Poe's incisive revenge fable.

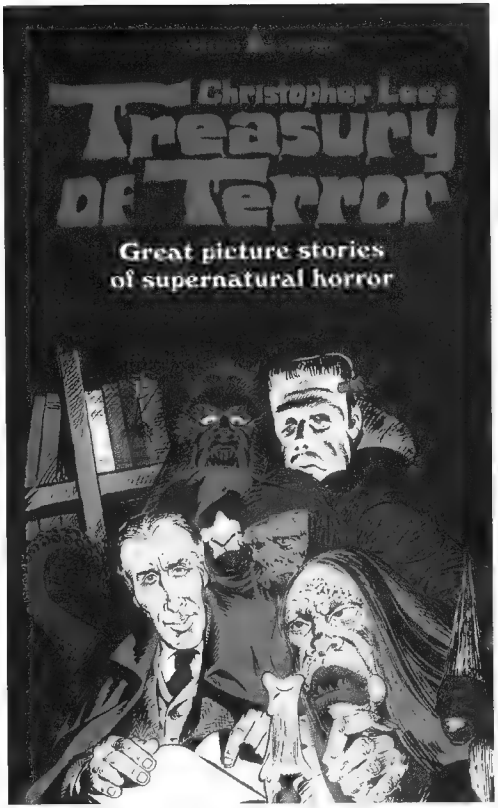
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, FIENDISH FANS... YOUR PLEAS, SCREAMS, AND THREATS HAVE NOT BEEN IGNORED! FOR THE PAST COUPLE OF ISSUES WE'VE BEEN NEGLECTING A FEATURE DEAR TO EVERYONE'S HEARTS (THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE A HEART)... THE CREEPY CLASSIC! SO LET'S IMMEDIATELY HOP BACK INTO THE SCREAM-STREAM WITH THE WEIRD WONDER OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S...
HOP-FROG!
NEVER WAS ANYONE SO KEENLY ALIVE TO A JOKE AS THE KING ... AND, UPON THE WHOLE, PRACTICAL JOKES SUITED HIS TASTE FAR BETTER THAN VERBAL ONES. NO ONE BETTER SUITED HIS TASTE AS OBJECT FOR JEST THAN THE COURT FOOL, HOP-FROG!
IN TRUTH, THE FOOL STRIDES BETTER ON HIS HANDS THAN WITH HIS CRIPPLE LEGS... NOT HALF SO AMUSING!
COME, HOP-FROG! YOUR TRICKS BORE US... BE FUNNY! YOU NEED SOMEONE TO SHOW YOU HOW... FANG!





ROBERT BLOCH'S
The Past Master
Luigi's
CRAIG TENNIS
A. McWILLIAMS
COLD WAR TENSIONS GET HOTTER, AND POPULAR FEAR GETS COLDER, BUT LIFE GOES ON...

The "youngest" of the five stories adapted in **Treasury of Terror**, Robert Bloch's "The Past Master" from 1955, is also the best thing in the book, with an agile script by Craig Tennis and elegant art by Alden McWilliams (reprinted in **Eerie** #12).



Christopher Lee's **Treasury of Terror** 1966 This Pyramid paperback original features comics versions of five famous fantasy tales: three by 19th-century authors (Kipling, Stoker and Bierce), and two by modern masters H.P. Lovecraft and Robert Bloch. Mort Drucker drew the fun cover of Lee and his alter egos.

Stoker chiller, "The Squaw," with Goodwin and Crandall translating this sharply-pointed formula yarn from 1892.

Creepy #15 updated Washington Irving's classic "The German Student," penned back in 1824, one of several key weird tales by this seminal writer. This time Goodwin teamed with Jerry Grandenetti for an awesome adaptation.

Issue 19 (Mar 1968) is special for three reasons. First, the Creepy Classic, Rudyard Kipling's "Mark of the Beast," is the only one of the series to be cover-featured, with an evocative painting by

(facing page)

Creepy #19 (Mar 1968) Black magic and colonialism make an evil mix in Rudyard Kipling's cautionary fable from India, and Vic Prezio's cover captures the blasphemy of the beast-man.

Creepy #21 (Jul 1968) Although this Gutenberg Monteiro cover isn't specifically listed as being for the adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's "The Rats in the Walls," it certainly works well for this final Creepy Classic, the only 20th-century story of the series.

Vic Prezio. Secondly, the story (with script by Craig Tennis and art by Johnny Craig) is actually a reprint from the little-known Pyramid paperback 1966 original, Christopher Lee's *Treasury of Terror*.

Treasury of Terror packages five classic adaptations and was engineered by the aforementioned Russ Jones. Even though he no longer worked for Warren, Jones apparently managed to sell him reprint rights to at least four of these tales. Whatever problems the two had, it is evident that Jones was a classic horror fan; he wrote and drew the adaptation of the H.P. Lovecraft story (finished by August Derleth), "Wentworth's Day," for the Pyramid PB, the only one of the five not spotted (might have missed it!) as reprinted in a Warren mag.

The third unusual thing about *Creepy* #19 is that it boasts yet another Creepy Classic, Sheridan Le Fanu's delicious vampire novella, "Carmilla." Drawn by Bob Jenney, it's been speculated (on the Grand Comics Database) that this yarn was cut from *Treasury of Terror* and bought by Warren as part of the deal with Jones.

Jenney also drew the final Creepy Classic (for #21 Jul 1968), "The Rats in the Walls," H.P. Lovecraft's poetic and powerful 1923 chiller of psychic collapse. It's interesting that the series ended with Lovecraft and the only story from the 20th century. That leaves ten of the eleven Creepy Classics devoted to 19th century fantasy, but three more antique gems lurk in early issues of *Eerie*. Ambrose Bierce's overwhelming "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" appeared in #9, Poe's macabre "Masque of the Red Death" in #12, and "Dracula's Guest," by Bram Stoker, was reprinted in #16 from *Treasury of Terror*.

[See a list of Warren's Creepy Classics on page 16.]

WARREN's "CREEPY" CLASSICS

In *Creepy*:

#3 The Tell-Tale Heart (Poe), 1965
#4 The Damned Thing (Bierce), 1965
#5 The Judge's House (Stoker), Oct 1965
#6 The Cask of Amontillado (Poe), Dec 1965
#7 The Body Snatcher (Stevenson), Feb 1966
#11 Hop Frog (Poe), Oct 1966
#13 The Squaw (Stoker), Feb 1967
#15 The German Student (Irving), Jun 1967
#19 Mark of the Beast (Kipling), Mar 1968
#19 Carmilla (Le Fanu), Mar 1968
#21 The Rats in the Walls (Lovecraft) Jul 1968

Honorable Mentions- classic horror adaptations in *Eerie*:

#9 An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge, Goodwin/Jenney (Bierce), Jun 1967
#12 Masque of the Red Death, Goodwin/Tom Sutton (Poe), Nov 1967
#16 Dracula's Guest, Nelson Bridwell/Frank Bolle (Stoker), Jul 1968

Letter from the Editor

[continued from page 7]

changes and still stays good, read *Entertainment Weekly*. They build on what they have and try new things but the core remains. I realize you feel you must evolve or die but your readers will stay with you even with price increases (up to a point). Basically, if the quality is there, we'll always be loyal.

Thank you, Paul Levitz, for giving us a window into the inner sanctum. Your letter was captivating. I personally had a visit to the DC office right around the publication of *GL/GA* #82, (1971 I think). My father was writing an article for the *New York Times* magazine on the growing social relevancy in comic books called "Shazam, Here Comes Captain Relevant." At the time, even my little 10 year old comic collecting brain understood; the book that changed it all was *GL/GA* #76 and that book was featured as such in the *Times* article. As I was given a tour through the office by Carmine Infantino we ended up in the vault. I remember walls of steel gray shelves filled to the top with piles of what we now would refer to as NM 9.8 DC file copies. At that tender age I somehow knew the significance of where I was and broke into my first certified comic book collector's cold sweat: heart beating fast; confusion; desperate thoughts; just how many of these babies were leaving the room with me? Not quite having the nerve to ask if I could have one copy of each comic in sight, I asked Carmine if could have a copy of *GL* #76. "Well, that's already become a collector's item, and we don't have a lot of those left." Carmine exclaimed with a slight mix of pride and embarrassment. I was almost as happy with the *GL/GA* #83 and *Wonder Woman* #188 and a pile of *Flash*, *Batman*, *JLA* and about 12 others. In fact I was delirious.

But back to my point; it's great to read Paul's detailed notes on editorial changes, writing teams and artists, and the sea change that was sweeping through DC at the time, which is infinitely fascinating, however,… if the beginning of the Golden and Silver Ages are marked by single books and obviously we all agree *Action* #1 started the Golden Age, and most agree *Showcase* #4 started the Silver, then what book does Paul feel marked the beginning of the Bronze or at least the end of the Silver Age. I would like to know, and remember, Paul, you can only pick one. My feeling through 32 years of collecting has never wavered; *GL/GA* #76 started the Bronze Age. Period. If you have to pick one book then every other choice falls short. The only other books in the distant running for me are *Jimmy Olsen* #133 or *New Gods* #1 and neither is as significant for multiple reasons. I think we need to end the debate right here. All for, raise their hands; all against…I predict the ayes have it. *GL/GA* #76 started the Bronze Age. Now, no more nonsense on that. No more *Weird War* #1 or *Night Nurse* suggestions please. So Paul, if you're reading, please weigh in.

One last thing: Michael Kronenberg has really shut me up. His layouts are developing into serious territory. The cover layout to #112 is beautiful and so eerily foretells of the evil and mysterious qualities held within this book, this *CBM* #112. And, lo and behold, it is so.

If they're all as good as issue #112 then we ain't got nuttin' to worry about. Keepin' the faith,

Dan Braun
Nazareth PA

Dan, your letter has made my day! This is exactly the kind of letter we like to receive, from a reader who has been critical of CBM *in the past and now thinks we are moving ahead in the right direction. I'm sure Paul Levitz will read your comment and I hope he will answer. And now that we feature 32 pages of full color in each issue, Michael Kronenberg's layouts just keep getting better and better.*

Keep writing to CBM*! We read each and every letter and pay attention to what you are saying! And if you like the way* CBM *has been looking for the past year or so, subscribe! We need more subscribers! Toodle-oo!*

RC

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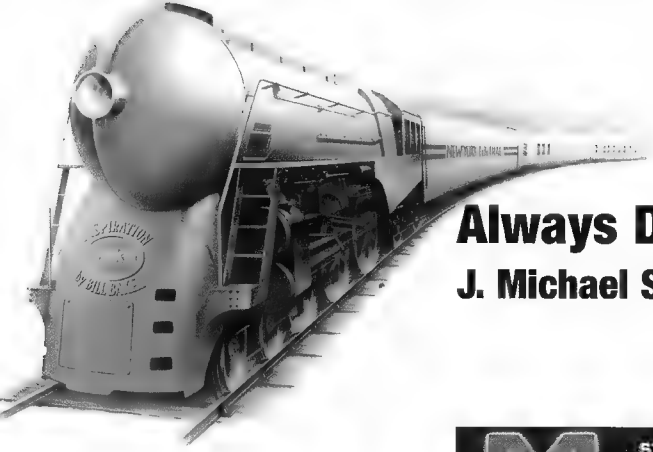


Always Doing the Write Thing

J. Michael Straczynski on his influences

an interview by Bill Baker

As he's noted in numerous interviews, J. Michael Straczynski is a writer. And while he also has said that tag covers him from beginning to end, it certainly doesn't encompass all of his skills as a creator. After working for years in the television industry and publishing a series of moderately successful novels and collections, Joe [as he likes to be called] rocketed into the popular consciousness with Babylon 5. *Even before the end of that popular show's five-year run, he was being courted by numerous publishers and studios. Currently, he's serving as a producer of Showtime's comic-based* Jeremiah *cable television series while simultaneously writing the monthly adventures of everybody's favorite wallcrawler in Marvel's* Amazing Spider-Man. *And, as if that's not enough to keep him out of trouble, he's also scripting* Supreme Power *for the House of Ideas, which features a decidedly different and mature minded version of the perennially popular Squadron Supreme in a real world setting. And that's just the stuff that's been announced as of press time.*

As stated above, the man is a writer. But perhaps "writing machine" would be a more apropos description.

Still, this laundry listing of his current projects doesn't do justice to the depth of characterization, the finely turned phrases and well wrought dialogue, the effortless movement of plot or the essential love for the human comedy and its players that imbues his work, be

it intended for the page, the big or small screens. Simply put, the man's got a big heart. One which is big enough to encompass all this and every possible universe he considers or creates for his public, and that informs everything he does. Still, the best part of it all, aside from his willingness to share his immense talents with the world at large, is the fact that J. Michael Straczynski is living his dream each and every day.

Life, and art, doesn't get much better than that.

Comic Book Marketplace: If memory serves, you've mentioned in the past that you were a fairly avid comics reader as a kid. How did you discover comic books, what titles did you like, and what about those particular books attracted your attention?

J. Michael Straczynski: I actually first discovered comics—and that's such an odd phrase, to discover comics, it's not exactly like discovering radium, is it? I mean, they were there the whole time—when I was maybe seven, and driving cross-country with my family from job to job, state to state. (We did this a lot, with the result that I ended up going to an unknown number of grade schools, but averaging about one per year, followed by four high schools and four colleges.) We were, I think, somewhere in Oklahoma, and we'd pulled into a gas station. The guy who ran the station had some extra comics that his kid had read and was going to throw out, and he gave them to me (I assume out of pity seeing this bedraggled, heat-ridden family with New Jersey license plates pulling in right in the fall-dead heat of summer). There were about a dozen or so comics, mainly *Beetle Bailey* stuff, Archie stuff, all the middle-of-the-road comics of the time (which would've been around 1961 or so).

I'd never actually seen a comic in person before that, and though even then I knew they were lame, I was fascinated by the kind of stories that used both pictures and words. Read 'em repeatedly as we crossed the country en route to wherever the hell we were going that year. I don't remember the destination, but I remember the comics, so that should tell you something.

I was getting by on a ten-cent-per-week allowance, so I wasn't exactly able to buy comics of my own. So I'd read comics from other kids. I remember once at Catholic School we had a fair and I had a whole quarter to spend on the games. I saw that one kid spent a nickel to "fish" in the window of the school basement, where volunteers would pin one thing or another to the fishing line, pull up a comic book. I thought this was amazing and spent a nickel to fish as well. Got crap. Did it four more times and only on the final nickel, having busted my whole quarter on one game and four things I didn't want, did I finally come back with a comic book: *Batman versus Clayface*. I was very pleased until I realized that I could just as easily have stuck the quarter in my pocket and bought *two* comics at the store, plus a candy bar, for the same quarter. I've always been a stooge that way.

Over time, my main supplier of comics, since again I couldn't afford to buy them myself (we weren't exactly well-off) turned out to be my aunt in Paterson, New Jersey, who would buy them over time so that when I'd show up (at maybe 8 or 10) to stay for the occasional weekend, I'd be hip-deep in comics. (I think she bought them and read them herself, she just didn't want to cop to it.) They were mainly DCs and Marvels—all the Silver Age stuff, *Batman*, *Superman*, *Metamorpho*, *World's Finest*, *Flash*, *Green Lantern* and other DC stuff, and on the Marvel side all the *first issues* and subsequent runs of *X-Men*, *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *Iron Man*, *The Hulk*, you name it—along with the occasional Gold Key or indie comic, such as *Doctor Solar*, *Turok* and the like. I was in heaven those weekends, just reading non-stop.

Truth is, I was a slow student initially, because we were always going from town to town, and the curriculum varied tremendously across locations. (I was also nearsighted; something my father didn't want to admit, so I didn't get

glasses until late junior high school.) So in a very real way, comics taught me how to read, taught me a love of language, and storytelling, and most of all, an appreciation for heroes, for chivalry and bravery and a refusal to surrender.

CBM: It sounds like comics had a pretty big impact on you. Did you learn anything else from them, and did they influence you in terms of your choice of a profession?

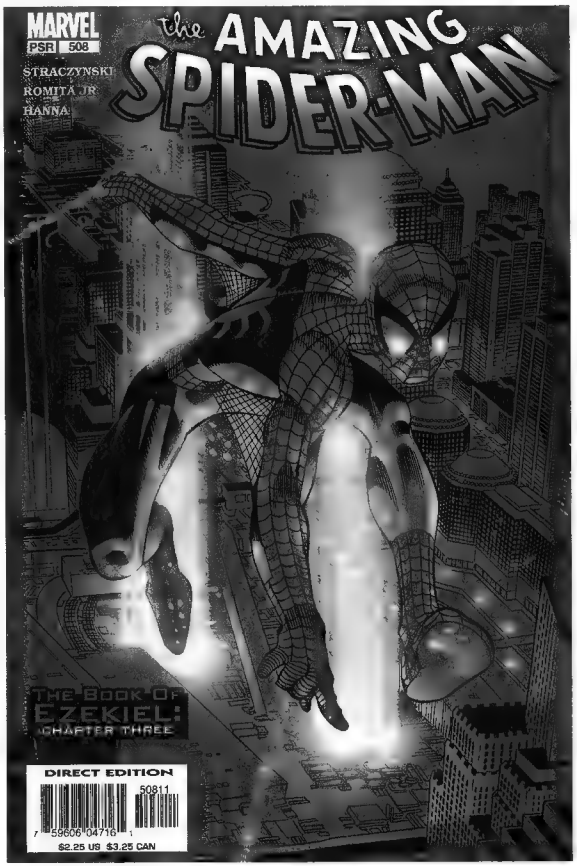
JMS: In addition to the elements just noted, I learned my sense of morality, my sense of right and wrong, from comics. That may sound stupid and naive, but it's true, and that understanding is what propels me to this day. I was at Chicago Comic Con a few years ago, while *Babylon 5* was on, and helped tackle a shoplifter in the dealer's room, brought him to the ground. While we were holding the guy for police, one of the guys at the con asked why I'd done it, since I could've gotten hurt. I pointed to the nearby six-foot-tall cutout of Superman and said, "I was standing here right in front of the Guy, how could I not do something?"

Of all the comics and characters from that time, probably the one single most iconic hero for me was, and largely remains, Superman. I have one of the biggest collections of Superman stuff you're ever going to see, but for me it's not so much the collectable stuff as what he represented for me: he couldn't be hurt, he was kind of alone in a strange world, and he could do anything he made up his mind to do. And there was never any question in his mind about doing the right thing. You just do it. And that, to me, became very important to my moral development. I still tend to see things in black-and-white terms, and if I come into a situation where the only way to keep my job is to do something I don't agree with on principle, I'll quit. It's cost me any number of jobs over the years, but I can't do otherwise. Wouldn't be right.

My family, of course, didn't see it that way at the time, and when my grades slipped, my father blamed it on comics, and as I sat there, he took all the comics that I'd so carefully stored and protected, kept in pristine condition, all my number one issues of *X-Men* and *Spider-Man* and the rest…and tore them in half, one after another, until they were all gone. It still makes me angry.

But the other thing about comics is that this was where I first began to appreciate the process of storytelling. I was kind of oblivious at first to the idea of *writers*, but over time I gradually began to figure it out, that somebody sat down and wrote down these words. And I was entranced by that.

Once that understanding took form, I knew, absolutely and without doubt, that I was going to be a writer. When people asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up—and remember, I was maybe 12 at the time—I said "I'm going to be a writer." When they asked if I'd written anything yet, I'd say, "I'm not ready yet." So I prepared. For years. Learned everything I could about writing, about grades of papers and pencils and pens. Took four years of typing in high school because I knew that writers had to type well. Then, one day, in my senior year of high school, I came home, finished reading *The Color Out of Space* by Lovecraft, put it down…and suddenly, something clicked, something turned over in my brain. I picked up a paper and pen and began writing. I wrote ten pages that day and, improbably, have continued to write ten pages per day, every day, in the 31 years since then.



CBM: Did your father ever change his opinion of your comics habit, and come to understand what they offered you, or even appreciate the good influence they had upon you?

JMS: In (much) later years he realized that they would have been worth quite a bit of money so that put kind of a crimp in things. In (even further) later years after I'd spent a lot of time talking to all kinds of people about how comics taught me to read, he began to understand what they had meant. But that opinion, good, bad, or indifferent, meant and means nothing to me at this stage in my life. Nor did it mean much previously. You must understand that my early years, and my family life for all of my youth and adolescence, could be the basis of any number of psychological

horror films. But it's also not something I'm prepared to discuss at this time.

CBM: Do you remember if there was a particular moment when you realized that you could, and wanted to, make your living telling tales?

JMS: I always knew I wanted to write, from an impossibly early age. I didn't think of it in terms of making a living because you don't really think about those things as a kid. I just knew that I wanted to tell stories. That I *loved* telling stories. If there was any one salutary moment that cemented the whole thing for me, it would've been one that happened in my senior year of high school.

Once the switch flipped in my head and I began to write, I started writing short little plays that, to my astonishment, my teacher thought good enough to get some of the students involved to perform them for other classes on a rotating basis. Finally, one day, I got summoned to the principal's office (fearing the worst, naturally). He explained that they were going to institute a new yearly event, a humorous play by one of the students, and that I was it, and if I screwed it up they wouldn't do it anymore thereafter (no pressure). So I wrote the darn thing, and directed it, and it was performed for the whole school in our auditorium/basketball court at Chula Vista High School.

Lunch was right afterward, and suddenly all over the campus, kids who had totally ignored me before, for whom I was practically invisible moments earlier, shouted out what fun it was, high-fived me, called over to me, congratulated me ... I was, literally for the first time in my life, noticed. And I remember thinking, "Boy, I could do this forever."

And I have.

CBM: What other books did you read growing up, what about them appealed to you, and what did you get from them—aside from entertainment?

JMS: I read SF, fantasy and history primarily, but really I devoured just about anything I could get my hands on. I became a voracious reader, in large measure due to comics. By age 14 I had read just about everything worth reading in the kid's section of any given library, and had progressed to the adult sections in short order. I loved anything that conveyed that sense of wonder: Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov, Harlan Ellison, Theodore Sturgeon, Robert Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, Richard Matheson.... I read everything I could get my hands on by these and others. One day I stumbled across Tolkein and had my brain splattered against the wall by the power of myth and epic storytelling.

I went to them for escape, because my life at the time—for most of my youth and adolescence, to be honest—was pretty crappy overall. I went to the library to escape, carrying back armloads of books that would take me away from where I was and transport me to the Martian desert, to the heart of the Foundation, to the future, the past, to Lovecraft's cyclopean towers and Doc Smith's visionary war of generations and competing galactic forces. For me it was all about that sense of wonder that comes with the best of SF.

CBM: What about other media? Were you a film buff or avid TV watcher?

JMS: We didn't get to films very often, and when they did they were drive-in movies that were invariably the latest gore flick (long story). I got dragged to every monstrous, graphic horror movie ever made. If Herschel Gordon Lewis made it, I ended up seeing it. In my early teens. The only movie I got dragged to that I did want to see—and my parents didn't know what it was about—was *Barbarella*, and as soon as she started that strip in the beginning, the next sentence I heard was one that to this day fills me with horror: "Take off your glasses." For years, anything blurry was erotic.

So most of my movie watching came through television, through the midnight movies that I wasn't supposed to stay up and watch. That was how I first saw *This Island Earth* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *The Thing* and others that formed the basis of my understanding of filmic storytelling. I was also an addict of anthology series such as *The Outer Limits* and *Twilight Zone*. Still am, by the way, and if one of those films shows up while channel-surfing, I'm there for the duration.

CBM: You've mentioned a number of writers whose work influenced you, and what aspects of their work had an impact on you; how did you absorb those influences fully, and yet discover and retain your own voice? Is this something you simply work through, or is there more to it than that?

JMS: I think every writer starts out borrowing other writers' voices, not so much deliberately as just sort of intuiting it; you like the way Raymond Chandler writes, so you write something in that hard-boiled detective fashion. It's not so much a matter of thinking "I want to use his style" as "I like this kind of writing." This becomes the writer version of training wheels, allowing you to try on different styles and approaches, finding those that fit and work with you and casting aside what doesn't work for you. Along the way you begin to figure out what your own voice is, and in time discard everything that isn't you, your voice. It's kind of what you hear from sculptors, that the horse has always been inside the stone block, you just have to chip away everything that isn't a horse to get there. Rod Serling started off more or less doing Norman Corwin, as did Ray Bradbury. In turn, I started off more or less doing Rod, and Ray, and H P Lovecraft (whose style was clearest to me since it is, to be honest, the most unsubtle of the bunch). To this day I have a kind of writerly mimicry that I can do easily; I can imitate just about anyone's style. But now it's kind of a parlor trick, with no bearing on my own work. It came to a matter of just realizing one day that my voice in writing should be the same as my voice when I speak. Once that clicked, I could set the training wheels aside.

Frazetta's Magic Pencil

by Dave Winiewicz

Actually, Frazetta does not own any magic pencils, but there is plenty of magic in his pencil original art. Frazetta has always maintained that the pencil was his favorite medium. He has said that it's the easiest to use, easiest to control, and truly wonderful effects can be obtained rather effortlessly. Anyone who has seen his pencil originals will attest to the breathtaking qualities that they possess. In 1994 a new book of pencil illustrations, *Illustrations Arcanum*, was published by Glenn Danzig. This was an entire book of newly drawn art and people were stunned by the quality. Ferocious cats, seductive women and assorted monsters jumped off the pages. The book was an immediate success both financially and aesthetically. Prior to the publication of this book most people had not seen Frazetta's work in pencil format, except for a few poorly reproduced drawings in obscure men's magazines. As amazing as all these drawings are, my favorite Frazetta pencil comes from an earlier era.

The greatest Frazetta pencil drawing (and one of his greatest artistic efforts in any medium) comes from the year 1967. While visiting the home of long-time Burroughs collector Vern Coriell (founder of the *Burroughs Bibliophiles*), Frazetta executed a drawing of Tarzan and Bolgani; it was given to Vern as a gift. Quite a gift! It is the finest pencil drawing ever created by Frazetta. I strongly suspect that Frank's competitive nature came into play in creating this illustration. Frazetta was surrounded by Burroughs fans, a very ardent breed, and also surrounded by Vern's magnificent collection of original art, including Fosters, St. Johns, Matanias, and others. Not to be outdone, Frank showed them what he could do. Frazetta asked Vern for a simple #2 pencil and a sheet of paper. Frank sat down at the dining room table with a sheet of smooth typing paper and started to draw. Frazetta was surrounded by Burroughs fanatics who focused on every movement of the pencil and were stunned by the scene that was coming to life. It must have been pure magic to be present at this moment of spontaneous creativity. Frazetta was in his element: completely confident, creative and entertaining. As always, Frazetta used no reference photos or visual crutches. He dipped into his imagination and just brought it to life. Frank finished the drawing the following day. The result is one of the two best Burroughs drawings ever produced (the other being the Canaveral Press ink drawing of Tarzan rising out of the group of natives, but that's a story for another day).

The original art is eye-popping. Frazetta caught a moment encompassing life and death, an electric moment heavily pregnant with the implications of future action. Simple illustration, fine art and high art merge in the creative excellence of this piece. Tarzan is straddling a large limb, symbolizing the barrier that exists between raw animality and humanity. Tarzan is explosively poised to confront the beast in its own realm, the jungle. The hero always prepares to cross a threshold that will test his courage and character. I know of few other works that so completely capture the essence of the ape-man. Bolgani is equally well presented: wild, primal, seething, uncontrolled. His face is savage, noble and terrifying. Tarzan confronts Bolgani; ape-man confronts savage beast. Bear in mind that this scene illustrates the meeting of Tarzan with the son of the first Bolgani, who Tarzan killed with a knife at the age of twelve. Tarzan's new confrontation is fraught with those memories and conflicting emotions. After all, this is his cousin. However, the historical text is only a starting point for this effort. There is so much resonant depth in this drawing that transcends any narrative story. This is *art*, not just illustration.

On another level, a deeper level, man is confronting his hidden nature, that part which has been tamed, domesticated and civilized. Here, it is all displayed on the surface with brutal frankness; nothing is hidden. A moment of life and death confrontation against a backdrop of obscure and dark mystery. The natural expressive gesture of man and beast is perfectly captured, flawless in execution. Both figures are rigid with emotion, yet natural; there is no stiffness or artistic hesitation anywhere to be seen. The technique is rich and diverse. Frazetta is able to use the pencil to generate textures that we can almost touch. The moss-laden tree with dripping roots, the wildly-flowing hair of Tarzan, the distended veins in a body poised for immediate action, the bristling hair of Bolgani, his facial intensity, and the dark "suggested" jungle all create a tableaux of power and beauty. There is great beauty in this drawing, a quality that is always present in Frazetta. He employs a "lines within lines" technique that gives a visual richness and depth to the surface. The body of Bolgani, the back of Tarzan, his thigh, and the tree's surface all exhibit this subtle use of the pencil. Orchestrating and synchronizing the line work in this fashion is rarely used by Frazetta in his pencil work. He

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and My Greatest Mistake!

did use it in the *Windblown* pencil, another rare treasure from the early fifties. His later pencils feature a completely different style where a painterly approach is used. Multiple lines are replaced by softly gradated tones of pencil. Frazetta has commented: "I like my pencils to just turn to smoke, to be that soft." That later approach is the approach of a painter's sensibility; this early effort is the approach of a draftsman. Line is dominant. Tonalities are there to serve the purposes of the lines.

Tarzan and Bolgani is nothing less than elemental in its scope, a microcosm of the human soul and its contradictions, repressions and passions. The picture is not just dynamic, it *roars* with life. It is an unqualified masterpiece, a masterpiece of courage, dignity and valor against a background of dark death. Frazetta has never been better.

This story has a sad ending of a strange sort. I bought this drawing from Vern Coriell in the 1970s and enjoyed it for many years. In the early 1990s I was sidetracked with a bad case of "Flash Gordon Fever." I wanted a great *Flash Gordon* original for my collection. The market was super-hot at the time and a wealthy collector from Texas was buying everything in sight. Prices were skyrocketing. Russ Cochran, who always had the "good stuff," called and offered me a sensational *Flash* from 1936 with all the main characters, including Ming the Merciless. This page, 3/8/36, is from Alex Raymond's greatest artistic period and is a "10" in anyone's estimation. It is a classic of the highest artistic quality. I traded the *Bolgani* pencil to Russ for the *Flash*. If I didn't, the *Flash* would have been sold the very next day. The wealthy Texan was literally flying his own plane to Russ' Missouri home to buy every *Flash* he had. He got them all—but one. The *Flash* looks great on my wall, but I miss that Frazetta drawing. Did I make a mistake? It depends on whom you ask. If you ask me, I made a big mistake!

"Ruse" #17 and #18 Cover Art

by John R. Stuart

You have a quest! Your quest consumes your every waking hour, it has been known to invade your dreams, and it occupies your thoughts when you are supposed to be concentrating in the boardroom. The quest for your personal *Holy Grail*!

The Holy Grail is that one collectible pursued with a near fanatical obsession, price no consideration, a quest that must be completed.

Your Grail might be a copy of *Detective* #27, an early statue of Superman, the original Steranko cover art for *Nick Fury Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* #3, a rare Mickey Mouse lunch box from 1937, a Zorro cap gun and holster set from 1961, or a mint Bill Graham psychedelic poster from the Grateful Dead concert in Toronto in 1967.

Your Grail could be nearly any collectible, but to qualify as a Grail it must be scarce, and there should be a quest associated with its acquisition.

Historically the Holy Gail refers to the Chalice or golden goblet that Christ drank from at the Last Supper, the cup that caught his blood when he was crucified. The origin of the Grail is found in ancient tales and writings, and it is often associated with the romantic tales of the Arthurian knight, Sir Perceval and the tales of Avalon.

Was there ever a Holy Grail? Is the Grail fact or fiction? The legends are based upon poetry and romantic fiction, their origins lost in the mists of time.

But *our* Grails exist and with time and persistence, they are obtainable.

I always thought my personal Grail would somehow be involved with the acquisition of a mint copy of *Amazing Spider-Man* #1, or perhaps with an early piece of original artwork for *ASM* by the great John Romita Sr., but over the years that I collected comics I lost my passion for *ASM* collectables.

In the fall of 2002 the owner of my local comic book store suggested I read *Ruse*, the new Gothic detective series from CrossGen. I have always loved the stories of Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Dole and CrossGen's *Ruse* quickly became a favorite of mine! The writing was complex, eloquent and at the same time witty. However, the highly detailed polished artwork really hooked me on this series. With pencils by Butch Guice, inks by Mike Perkins and Eisner-award-winning colors by Laura Martin the pages were breathtaking and the issues produced by the main *Ruse* team are likely the pinnacle of the three artists' careers. Very soon, I was addicted to this sophisticated series and began to acquire some outstanding examples of *Ruse* art, but covers from the series appeared to be very scarce!

In the late fall of 2002 I was lucky enough to get in touch with Butch Guice and I suggested to him that I'd like to interview him for *Comic Book Marketplace*. Russ Cochran thought it would make an interesting piece and Butch was good enough to conduct the interview with me via email during the Christmas holidays. Butch proved to be a fascinating and urbane guy, and it was both a pleasure and honor to get to know him. It was fun to do, and was published in *CBM* 101.

While I was interviewing Butch, which was just prior to the publication of *Ruse* #14, I eagerly inquired as to the availability of any *Ruse* cover art. Yes, my Grail would be to purchase the cover art from an issue of *Ruse*!!

I was disappointed to learn that most of the covers had been bought by Mark Allessi, the owner and CEO of CrossGen. Now it is tough to compete with a collector like Mark Allessi, owner, CEO and dot-com-type millionaire. This did not dissuade me from my quest. I visited conventions here in Toronto in the faint chance that a US dealer would bring a *Ruse* cover north of the border and end my search. No luck at the conventions. No luck on eBay, no covers available in any virtual Internet store.

While I was searching in vain, CrossGen was publishing *Ruse* issues 15 through 20. More covers which I could not find anywhere. They were all very nice examples of Guice's work, but it was the Jungle Girl themed covers to issues 17 and 18 that blew my mind. The Grail items were now truly defined. I had to have the cover art from *Ruse* 17 or 18. No question about it. The art on these

two covers is spectacular, blending the Jungle Girl theme with that of the action oriented detective novel.

Then, one Sunday morning my regular *Ruse* search on eBay was rewarded with a hit. There it was on the screen—the cover to *Ruse* #12 as well as the cover to *Ruse* #14. Not one but two *Ruse* covers available, both with Buy It Now options. A quick look into my US bank account resulted in dismay. I was cash poor, due to a number of recent purchases of *Ruse* interior pages. I could only afford one of the covers.

It took me approximately a half an hour of soul searching to decide which to purchase, and while both covers were very nice examples of Guice's work, I decided to use the Buy It Now option and take the *Ruse* #12 cover.

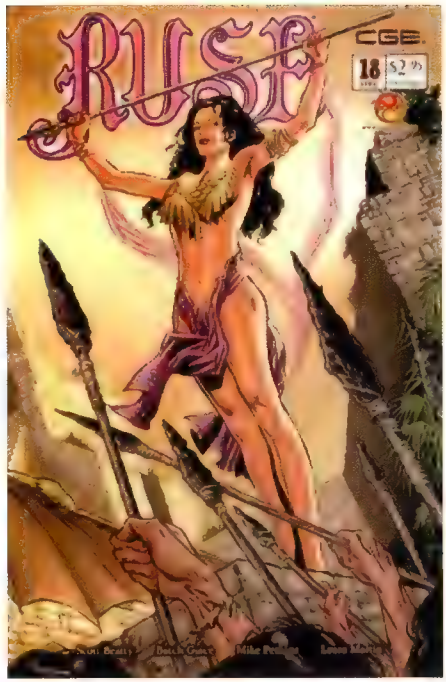
So, I now had found one of my treasures, but I still lusted after the covers to issues 17 and 18. Would they ever become available?

These covers represented the best covers to date by the team of Guice, Perkins and Martin. They haunted me. The covers detailed the series co-lead, Emma Bishop, riding a flying gargoyle, while dressed in skimpy jungle goddess attire. Miranda Cross the arch villain was featured on the cover of *Ruse* #18, leaning forward in a sea of jungle spears wearing next to nothing!

I was seeking not one, but two Holy Grails. However, the quest to locate them was a daunting task. Their location was unknown and I believed they were likely already in the collection of the owner of CrossGen, gone forever.

Then one morning in November, the standard eBay search of *Ruse* again rewarded me with a hit. Offered for auction, from The Artist's Choice, was my Holy Grail. My eyes must be deceiving me. There on the screen listed together, the covers to *Ruse* #17 and 18. Butch Guice had drawn both covers as one piece of art on a CrossGen double size 22" x 17" Bristol board! The heavens had opened and a ray of golden light shown down on my computer—not really, but it was one of those halcyon moments in my collecting career.

However, after I had taken several deep breaths and calmed myself I realized that the bidding for these two magnificent covers had already reached the $600 mark.



Ouch, this was going to be expensive. Not to be dismayed, I bookmarked the item and went off to calculate how much I could afford to bid. After much soul searching and rationalization, I set my budget and now the waiting began. I do not like to bid too early on eBay as it lets the competing bidders know that I am interested in the item. Waiting for those final minutes of the auction proved to be excruciating!

Several days later, the current high bidder withdrew their bid—very curious indeed. Was the competition in trouble? Well, to make a long story short, I ultimately succeeded and was the high bidder, securing my Holy Grail. The price, well, that remains a secret, the covers now grace my den wall, where I enjoy them every day!

So, my quest has ended, but has yours? Russ has agreed that a new column entitled the "Holy Grail" has merit and is looking to tell the tale of other collectors' quests for their Holy Grail items in subsequent issues of *Comic Book Marketplace*. So, prepare your tales of the search and submit them to Russ, and remember, when you least expect to discover your Grail it will appear. Perhaps, it is even now waiting on a dusty shelf in that thrift shop around the corner, or sitting buried in a stack of old *Time* magazines at a yard sale. However, rest assured the quest will continue.

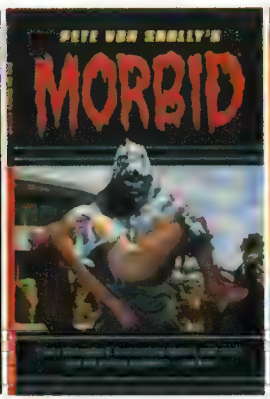
BY: PETE VON SHOLLY

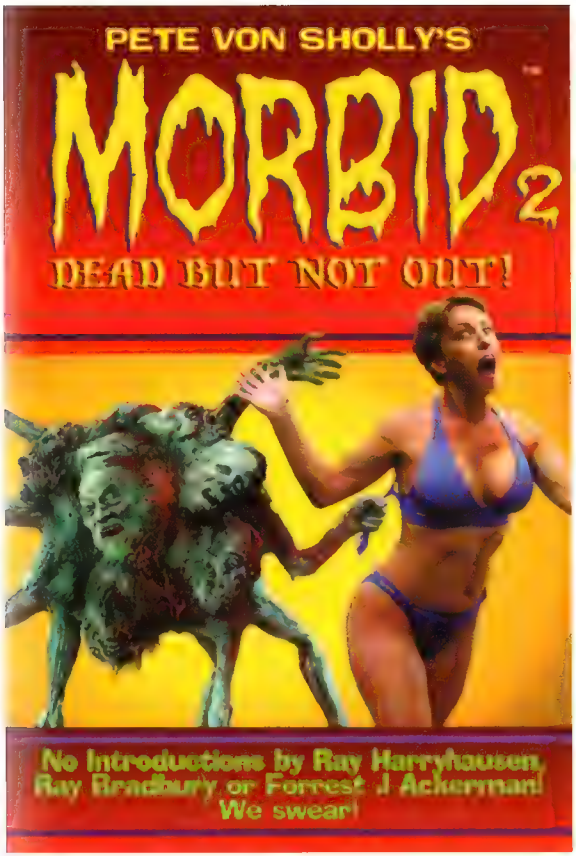
WHO (OR WHAT) IS PETE VON SHOLLY?

Who is this Pete Von Sholly guy anyway? Let's let him answer that one.

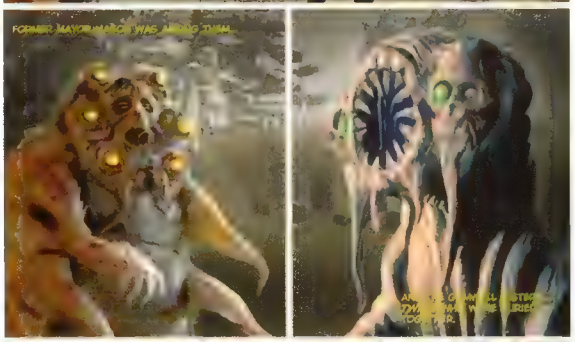
"I grew up on John Stanley, Carl Barks and Jack Kirby and I always wanted to make comics too (as both writer and artist) but I ended up working in the movie industry as a storyboard artist—a field which relates (but only to a degree) to comics. (Movie credits include *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Mars Attacks*, *The Mask*, *The Blob* remake, *Darkman*, *James and the Giant Peach* and dozens of others).

A few years ago, when I started working with Photoshop it occurred to me to try creating comics in a digital fumetti style. But I honestly didn't think of what I was doing as "mere" fumetti, whereas the degree of manipulation of the images was so different from anything I had seen anybody else do. It seemed there would be no limit to what I could accomplish and indeed, so far, that's been pretty much the truth. The great thing about doing comics this way




PETE VON SHOLLY'S
MORBID 2
DEAD BUT NOT OUT!
No Introductions by Ray Harryhausen, Ray Bradbury or Forrest J Ackerman! We swear!

Von Sholly and Van Cleave present
crazy hip groovy go-go way out!
MONSTERS
FOTOS OF THE EDITOR POSING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SORT OF FAMOUS
STILLS THAT WERE TOO CRUMMY FOR THE STUDIOS!
ADS and PROMOS disguised as "NEWS"!
$5.95 A Steal!



is that I can create a finished product almost single-handedly. I don't need a letterer, a colorist, etc. I lay out the pages in pencil, then take my photos, make scans, etc., and put it all together in the computer, add the text and I have a finished product—ready to go. This is something that would not have been possible a few years ago.

Spurred on by the fun and budding success of the work (See the two Dark Horse *Pete Von Sholly's Morbid* collections) I also knocked out (with a partner, Mike Van Cleave) a one-shot (which turned out *not* to be a one-shot) lampoon of those wonderful old monster magazines I grew up wasting my time and allowance on (and loving!). If I had it to do over, I'da bought *more* of them and taken better care of them too! What did I know—I just *read* the things over and over until they were falling apart. Anyway, our affectionate spoof is called *Crazy Hip Groovy Go-Go Way Out Monsters* and is published by TwoMorrows.

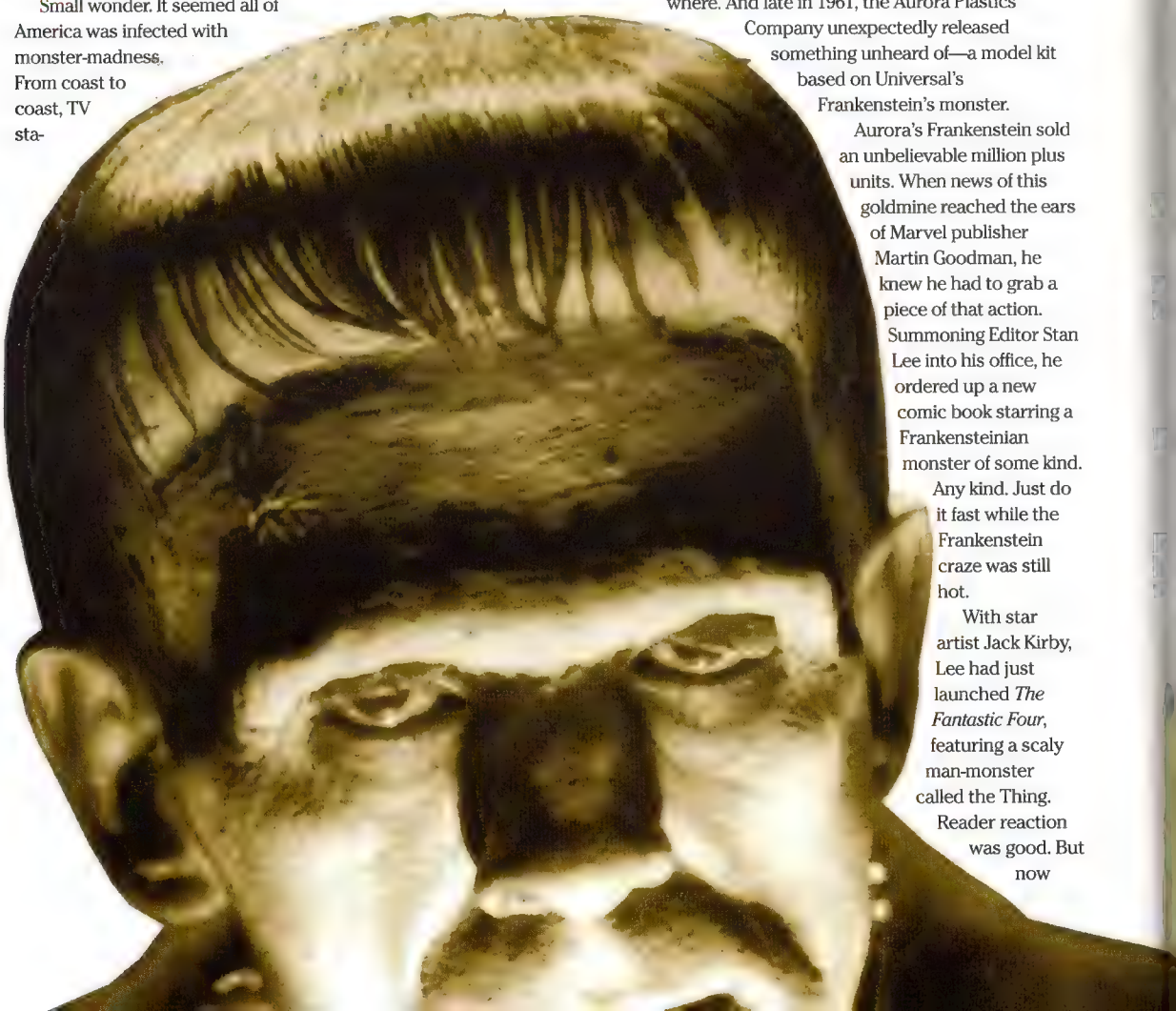
As to the subject matter, I always loved Charles Addams, Doctor Seuss, *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, Harryhausen, O'Brien, dinosaurs, Lovecraft, *MAD Magazine*, etc., etc., so what else would I be doing thematically? People used to say that stuff is "morbid" but, come on, there's plenty of real life morbid around! And if you read my comics you will find it's really "morbid with a wink" anyway."

HANDSOME

by Will Murray

In the closing months of 1961, Marvel Comics was a virtual monster factory. Big behemoths lumbered and thundered and shambled their way through the murkily-hued pages of *Tales to Astonish*, *Journey Into Mystery*, *Strange Tales* and *Tales of Suspense*.

Small wonder. It seemed all of America was infected with monster-madness. From coast to coast, TV stations were airing Creature Features showcasing old Universal monster movies, introducing the Baby Boom generation to the horrors of black and white films. You could buy monster gum cards at the same store counters that sold baseball cards. *Famous Monsters of Filmland* was new and selling out everywhere. And late in 1961, the Aurora Plastics Company unexpectedly released something unheard of—a model kit based on Universal's Frankenstein's monster.



Aurora's Frankenstein sold an unbelievable million plus units. When news of this goldmine reached the ears of Marvel publisher Martin Goodman, he knew he had to grab a piece of that action. Summoning Editor Stan Lee into his office, he ordered up a new comic book starring a Frankensteinian monster of some kind. Any kind. Just do it fast while the Frankenstein craze was still hot.

With star artist Jack Kirby, Lee had just launched *The Fantastic Four*, featuring a scaly man-monster called the Thing. Reader reaction was good. But now

FRANKENSTEIN

HORROR ROOTS OF THE HULK

Goodman was calling for a book built around a continuing monster—a much more difficult proposition. Especially under the Comics Code.

Lee and Kirby brainstormed ideas. Both men told similar yet differing stories about what happened next.

"The Hulk was my creation," claimed Kirby. "The Hulk was a prime example of the way I had matured. Here is this guy, Bruce Banner, a scientist, an intellectual who would turn into a primitive monster. The Hulk was my *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. I was borrowing from the classics. The classics are the most powerful stories we have. Everything I do is a variation on a theme."

"When I was a kid," recalled Lee, "I loved the movie *Frankenstein*, and I also loved the story of Jekyll and Hyde. Now, Hyde was a bad guy, but in the *Frankenstein* movie, with Boris Karloff, the monster was really the good guy. He didn't want to do anything wrong. It was all those idiots with torches that kept chasing him up and down the hill. Everybody was persecuting him and hounding him and I felt terribly sorry for the monster."

"The Hulk was Frankenstein," Kirby agreed. "Frankenstein can rip up the place, and the Hulk could never remember who he formerly was. What comics were doing all the time was updating the classics. So, I borrowed from *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. I felt there was a Mr. Hyde in all of us and that was a character I wanted and I called him the Hulk... The

No thriller ever made can touch it . . . this tale c
a monster who looked like a man . . . conceived in madness . . . built with lov
COLIN CLIVE - MAE CLARKE
JOHN BOLES - Boris KARLOFF
Burns with Passion!
Startles with Thrills!
Shocks with Surprise!
FRANKENSTEIN
THE MAN WHO MADE A MONSTER

James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) were Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's inspiration for the creation of The Hulk.

Hulk was misunderstood by people, he was a schizophrenic. I was updating *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Bruce Banner was a physicist. He was no longer a doctor."

According to Lee, inspiration also came from Universal's classic Wolfman films.

"I thought, 'Wow, if I could get a monster like Frankenstein who's basically misunderstood, that would be fun.' Then I felt, well, what do you do with the monster, and that's where the Jekyll and Hyde comes in. What if he's a normal person who turns into a monster at night? The Hulk was really the same as if I had done a story about a good werewolf."

Of course, they also ransacked their own work.

"I was given monsters," admitted Kirby, "so I did them. I would much rather have been drawing the Rawhide Kid. But I did the monsters...we had Grottu and Kurrgo and It. It was a challenge to try to do something—*anything* with such ridiculous characters. But these were, in a way, the forefathers of the Marvel superheroes. We had a Thing, we had a Hulk...and we tried to do them in a more exciting way."

"It was patently apparent that the Thing was the most

With the release of Universal's horror films to TV, there was an outbreak of monster mania in the country. AuroraPlastics Co. released its Frankenstein model, which was amazingly successful and sold over a million units. Marvel publisher Martin Goodman hopped on the bandwagon and asked Stan Lee to create a Frankenstein-like character, the result was The Hulk. Ironically, in 1966 Aurora created a Hulk model.

Similar to Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll, Dr. Banner is a tortured soul in an uncontrollable struggle with his darker half.

popular character in the Fantastic Four," recounted Lee, "and quite possibly in the entire comic book field. Not only did the readers like him best, but he grabbed me, too. For a long time I'd been aware of the fact that people were more likely to favor someone who was less than perfect—someone with feet of clay with whom they could identify. It's a safe bet that you remember Quasimodo, but how easily can you name any of the heroic, handsomer, more glamorous characters in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*? The more I dwelled upon the Thing's popularity, the more I realized that everyone likes a mixed-up, misunderstood monster-type marauder, so long as we know that beneath the grotesque surface there beats a heart as noble and pure as a driven comic-book creator!"

In *The Fantastic Four*, pilot Ben Grimm is transformed into the misshapen Thing by cosmic rays encountered during a failed space flight. Although terrifically strong, he's tragically unable to revert to human form. The new character would follow that formula, yet be unique in other ways.

"I thought it might give me more story flexibility if he could change back and forth, in and out of monster mode," explained Lee. "Why couldn't a monster have a secret identity?"

Lee also recalled putting a lot of work into naming the brutish creation.

"Now, of course, even a monster needs a name," he allowed in *Excelsior! The Amazing Life of Stan Lee*. "The name is important, because you have to convey the entire essence of your concept in a word or two. I wanted a name that conjured up an intimidating, gargantuan behemoth with a plodding brain and enormous power. So I turned to two other classics, Webster's dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus. I needed a name for this monstrous, potentially murderous hulking brute who...whoa! 'hulking brute' is the exact description, and instantly I knew 'hulking' was the adjective. Well, it wasn't much of a stretch to go from 'hulking' to 'hulk,' which sounded like the perfect noun."

Truthfully, Lee had been slapping that name on his comics creations for years. Whether they were robots or aliens or Wild West heavies, if Lee couldn't think of a better name for a big character, he called him the Hulk. He admitted to being inspired by a half-forgotten 1940s comic book monster called the Heap.

"When I did the Hulk, I had the Heap in mind when I made up the name. I'd discussed doing a monster-style book with Jack Kirby before I talked with Goodman. I wanted that same sound. 'Hulk' was a word that was similar to 'Heap', and that's what I was really after."

In fact, Lee may have briefly intended to call his new co-creation by the abandoned name of the old Hillman comics man-monster. On the eighth page of the first Hulk tale, the name Hulk has been re-lettered. On closer examination, the

Another Kirby masterpiece, the cover for...*The Incredible Hulk* #1 (Marvel, May 1962).

last three letters show signs of alteration, indicating the original name also began with an "H." The only logical H-initialed name is Heap. I doubt Lee would have called him the Hump or the Hunk. In fact, in the page before the Hulk is named, the adjective "hulking" has also been lettered over a different word (probably "brutish"), as if to reinforce the character's final name.

"And so the Hulk was born," Lee continued, "or the name was, anyway. I still needed to see the creature himself, and so I naturally turned to Jack Kirby. I remember telling him, 'Jack, you're going to think I'm crazy, but can you draw a good-looking monster, or at least a sympathetic-looking monster?' Even as I said it, I could hear how idiotic the words must have sounded."

But Kirby was up to the challenge.

"I...saw him as a kind of handsome Frankenstein," Kirby explained. "I never felt the Hulk was a monster because I felt the Hulk was me. I feel all the characters are me. Being a monster is just the surface thing."

Kirby also remembered that part of the creation differently than Lee.

According to the artist, "I did monster books which are still remembered and collected today. When I drew a monster book I'm going to give you the real thing... That's what I did for Marvel. But I felt that wouldn't sustain Marvel because it was the same old subject which had been used for quite a few years. Going back to superheroes was the thing to do.

"I came in with presentations. I said, 'This is what you have to do.' I came in with Spider-Man, the Hulk and the Fantastic Four. The Hulk I took from one of the monster stories I'd done. I took the Hulk name and made a superhero

THE SERUM IS ALREADY TAKING EFFECT! I--I CAN FEEL IT!
MY BONE STRUCTURE IS ALTERING! MY MUSCLES ARE EXPANDING!
NEW LIFE SURGES WITHIN ME! MY BODY THROBS WITH POWER -- POWER SUCH AS NO MAN HAS EVER KNOWN!

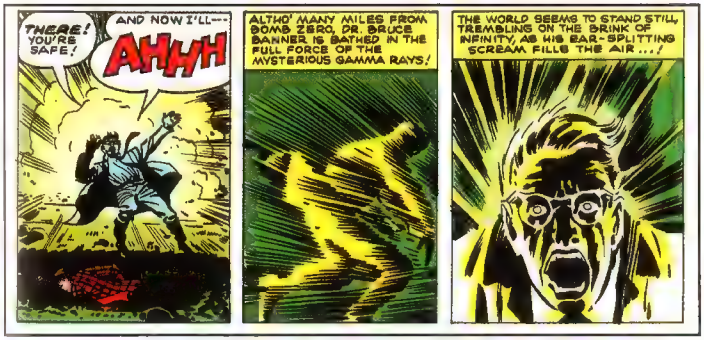
In 1962 Lee and Kirby created the precursor to their Hulk with this story "The Midnight Monster" in *Journey into Mystery* #79.

out of him because I felt it was realistic. I tried to make my characters relate to the human condition. There's a Hulk in all of us. It was a natural."

Kirby seems to be referring to the Midnight Monster, a Jekyll and Hyde villain who appeared in *Journey Into Mystery* #79, exactly one month before the Hulk's March 1 debut. He was vain scientist Victor Avery who created a serum that confers immortality on whoever drinks it. As a side effect, the subject becomes an ugly gargoyle. Jilted by the woman he loves, Avery drinks the serum, undergoing a three-panel Kirbyesque transformation that leaves him looking like an uglier version of the Incredible Hulk, possessing not only inhuman strength, but virtual indestructibility.

Going off on a rampage, he's dubbed the Midnight Monster. However, that name looks as if it too had been re-lettered, suggesting the possibility the name was originally the Midnight Hulk.

In fact, when Avery first becomes the Midnight Monster, he closely resembled the yet-uncreated Hulk. But in subsequent pages, he's bald and more grotesque. When Lee said that he and Kirby discussed doing a continuing monster hero before Goodman ordered the Hulk created, he may have been referring to this story. If so, the flesh-colored Midnight Monster was probably renamed and re-inked because Lee and Kirby decided to save the concept for their new super-Frankenstein monster.


THERE! YOU'RE SAFE!
AND NOW I'LL---
AHHH
ALTHO' MANY MILES FROM BOMB ZERO, DR. BRUCE BANNER IS BATHED IN THE FULL FORCE OF THE MYSTERIOUS GAMMA RAYS!
THE WORLD SEEMS TO STAND STILL, TREMBLING ON THE BRINK OF INFINITY, AS HIS EAR-SPLITTING SCREAM FILLS THE AIR...!

Product of the Atomic Age: Bruce Banner is bombarded with gamma rays from an atomic explosion, unleashing The Hulk, from *The Incredible Hulk* #1.

Contrary to Kirby, Stan Lee has always maintained that the formative idea of the Hulk originated in his imagination.

"I would come up with the concept," Lee asserted. "For instance, I would say I want to do a book called *Spider-Man* or *The Hulk* or *The Fantastic Four*. In the case of the Hulk and the Fantastic Four, and others, Jack Kirby created the characters visually, and it's important to keep the word 'visually' in there. He drew the characters that I described to him."

Differences aside, the two creators put together the first true Hulk story. During the production stage, Lee hit a snag.

"I thought it would be interesting to have the Hulk's skin change color when he reverted to his monstrous self," said Lee.

But what to color the brute he had dubbed the Incredible Hulk? The only restriction was to avoid duplicating the orange of the Fantastic Four's rocky Thing.

12¢
THE INCREDIBLE
HULK
"THE TERROR OF THE TOAD MEN"
GENERAL! IT'S THEM! THE TOAD MEN! THEY'RE ATTACKING!
IT IS TOO LATE FOR THE HUMANS TO STOP US NOW! NOTHING CAN STOP US!
NOTHING, EXCEPT... THE HULK!!!

***The Incredible Hulk* #2 (Marvel July 1962).**

Marvel colorist Stan Goldberg remembered, "I certainly didn't plan to make him red, and we kicked around the idea of making him green, but Stan wanted to try gray."

Lee explained, "I thought gray would be a heavy moody, somber color, in keeping with the melodramatic mood we wanted to establish."

"I fought him on that," Goldberg added. "I told him why it wouldn't work, and it *didn't* work, because we couldn't keep the color consistent throughout the book. Sometimes the Hulk was different shades of gray, and even green in one panel. If we hadn't already made the Thing orange, that'd have been the perfect color for the Hulk."

Lee got his way, but the results were disappointing. The Hulk looked not just inconsistent, but dull.

"It became painfully apparent that gray was not the happiest color choice I might have made," Lee admitted. "Then, mainly because there were no other emerald-skinned rampagers extant at that particular time, the color I finally opted for was a bravely bedazzling basic green."

With the second issue, the Hulk was re-colored as if he'd never been any other hue. No character commented on the abrupt change. It was simply accepted by actor and reader alike.

The Hulk came into being in formula 1950s monster movie style. Attempting to warn teenager Rick Jones away from the test zone for his experimental Gamma bomb, Dr. Bruce Banner absorbs a full blast of unknown Gamma radiation. That night, he unexpectedly turns into the brutish lead-colored

THAT'S NO RADIO! IT'S A GEIGER COUNTER!
IT MEASURES RADIATION! LISTEN TO IT! IT--IT'S GOING WILD!
IT'S GETTING LOUDER--AND LOUDER!! --FASTER AND FASTER!! WHAT'S HAPPENING??
WHAT IS HAPPENING ???
ARGHH
CLICK
HEY! LOOK AT YOU! YOU--CHANGED!
GET OUT OF MY WAY, INSECT!

Kirby's brilliant tranformation sequence from *The Incredible Hulk* #1.

menace the military dubs the Hulk.

Both co-creators took credit for the character's atomic-age genesis.

"I had already bombarded the Fantastic Four with cosmic rays," recounted Lee, "so I needed something new for our embryonic monster. It seemed to me I had heard of gamma rays somewhere. Had no idea what they really were, but that didn't matter. The name had a nice ring to it. So I found a way to zap Banner with some gamma rays and lo, another hero was born."

"The big thing at that time was radiation," Kirby said. "As long as we're experimenting with radioactivity, there's no telling what may happen, or how much our advancements in science may cost us. What would it do to the human body? Nobody knew anything about it. It was a big mystery. People were concerned. When people began talking about the bomb and its possible effect on human beings, they began talking about mutations because that's a distinct possibility. And I said, 'That's a great idea.'"

The Hulk's origin was not completely original. In the 1961 film, *The Beast of Yucca Flats*, a defecting Russian scientist met an identical fate. Nuclear and radiation-based heroes were the new wave in comics.

"Now remember they were created in a period when the atomic bomb was very visible," Kirby explained. "They reflect our fears....We're going further and further with atomic radiations and things we can't control.... I had a grand time with the atomic bomb."

Operating in the desolate nuclear testing areas of New Mexico, hounded by General Thunderbolt Ross's military machine, the Hulk underwent countless concept revisions during the title's brief run. He learned he could propel himself through the air in gigantic leaps. For a time, Rick Jones learned to control him. At night, the Hulk was locked in an underground cell hewn from rock to keep him from running amok. Finally, Banner developed a Gamma-ray machine that enabled him to become the unstoppable behemoth whenever the Hulk's great power was needed to defeat menaces too overwhelming for mere man.

For his part, Lee claimed Rick Jones.

"He was a necessary catalyst in the creation of the Hulk, and he also gave me a chance to demonstrate that it was possible to introduce a teenager into a comic book series without making him a cloying, simpy extension of the hero's personality. I like Rick being a fresh, surly, spirited kid who's the only one who knows the monster's secret, and who risks his life to help the world's most dangerous mortal."

First-issue sales were lackluster. Beginning with *Incredible Hulk* #3, Goodman instructed Lee to split each issue into two short Hulk stories. That way, any orphaned material could

The guilty movie pleasure *The Beast of Yucca Flats* (1961) tells the near identical origin story as the Hulk's.

For a time, Rick Jones was able to control the rampaging Hulk.

be used up in *Tales to Astonish*, whose lead feature, Ant-Man, was under consideration for promotion to a title of his own.

"Actually, *The Hulk* was going to be discontinued after the third issue," remembered Kirby. "So in comes these college guys from Columbia or NYU, and they say, 'The Hulk is the mascot of our dormitory.' I knew right away we'd got the college crowd—which we never had before! There we were, with a growing Hulk. I began to feel, 'Keep the sonuvabitch going!' I told everybody not to discontinue the book. I said a book needs time to mature, just like people."

But sales never rose substantially. Goodman ordered the *Incredible Hulk* to end with issue #6. Spider-Man's Steve Ditko drew his final full-length exploit in order to free up

THE INCREDIBLE HULK in "THE MONSTER AND THE MACHINE!"
Stan Lee + J. KIRBY
IN A SILENT, SECRET LABORATORY, A TENSE TEEN-AGER ADJUSTS A COMPLEX RAY-MACHINE OVER THE HEAD OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE LIVING CREATURE ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH! AND, AS HE DOES SO, RICK JONES MUTTERS TO HIMSELF...
I'VE NEVER OPERATED THIS MACHINE BEFORE! ONE MISTAKE, AND IT CAN MEAN DEATH FOR THE HULK--AND MAYBE FOR ME, TOO! BUT I'VE GOT TO TRY IT! NO MATTER WHAT--I'VE GOT TO DO IT!

In *The Incredible Hulk* #4 the Hulk is strapped to a mad scientist style laboratory machine similar to 1931's *Frankenstein* (see lobbycard, above).

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
12¢
THE Fantastic Four
12 MAR.
AT LAST!!! the FANTASTIC FOUR meet THE HULK!
THE HULK IS NEARBY! I CAN FEEL IT!
ANOTHER SECOND AND I'LL DESTROY THEM ALL!!
A BOOK-LENGTH EPIC!! NEED WE SAY MORE?!!!

Jack Kirby's classic first confrontation between The Hulk and The Thing, *Fantastic Four* #12 (Marvel Mar 1963).

Kirby for his next collaboration with Lee, *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*.

But the Hulk remained popular with readers, especially after he faced off against the Thing in the *Fantastic Four*'s 12th issue. That classic encounter had been produced weeks before *Hulk* #6, which had been prepared with the foreknowledge that this would be the Hulk's final issue.

It was an all-but-inevitable encounter.

"When Benjamin J. Grimm first made his appearance in the *FF*," explained Lee, "Jack Kirby and I decided to make him one of the strongest, most powerful characters in all of comicdom. A few months later, greedily seeking a bright new star in the Marvel firmament, we next concocted the conception of a rampaging monster named the Hulk. Now, at the time we did this, we never expected that ol' greenskin would one day find himself guest-starring in an issue of Fantastic Four. We never even knew that the Marvel universe would become so specialized that many of our characters would meet each other in various stories in different books. So we casually decided to make The Hulk the strongest living mortal—and that was that."

A flood of fan mail began pouring in.

"Next thing we knew," Lee said, "frenetic fans from all over the world were going at it hammer and tongs, trying to decide amongst themselves, from whatever clues they might have found in our stories, who was the stronger—the Hulk or the Thing? Virtually every letter contained the same demand: 'Let the Hulk fight the Thing!'"

Although the encounter was a failed attempt to entice *Fantastic Four* readers into saving *The Hulk* from cancella-

The Avengers #1 (Marvel Sep 1963).

The Avengers #3 (Marvel Jan 1964).

Journey Into Mystery #112 (Marvel Jan 1965).

tion, it marked the first Marvel Universe crossover.

"I felt that having the characters meet each other and get involved in each others' stories made the whole thing realistic," noted Lee. "And of course the readers loved it when there was a fight."

During the Hulk's orphan period, Lee temporarily forgot his civilian name, then turned the error into a virtue.

"When the strip started, I called him Bruce Banner. Then, in my usual bumble headed way, I started erroneously referring to him as Bob Banner in occasional strips. In answer to the flood of irate letters, I took the cowardly way out by explaining that his name was really Robert Bruce Banner!"

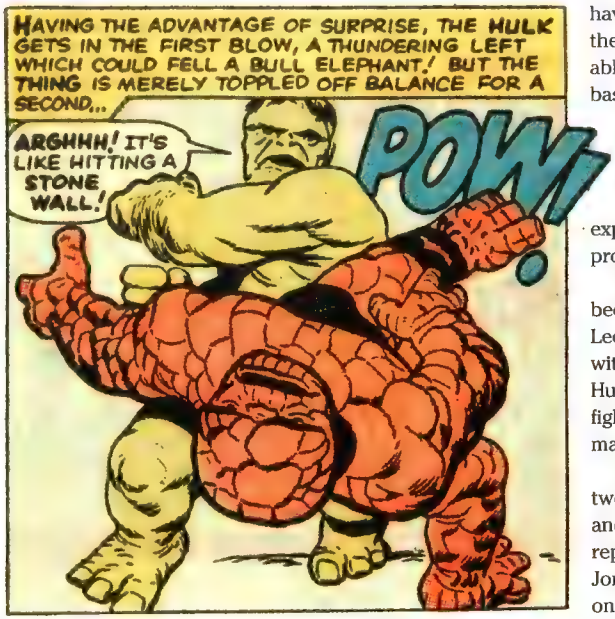
But the Hulk did not lie dormant for very long. Six months later, he popped up in *Avengers* #1 (Sep 1963) as the pawn of the mighty Thor's nemesis, Loki. With the Hulk as bait, Loki laid a trap for the God of Thunder. The ensuing free-for-all accidentally led to the formation of the Avengers. Despite their initial enmity, the Hulk was inducted as a founding member. It was a very strange turn for his career to take.

"After kicking it around for a while,' recalled Lee, "we came up with what seemed like a perfect combo. We'd start with the Hulk, just to make it difficult. Then, we'd include Thor, 'cause there's always room for a God of Thunder. Iron Man would be able to supply them all with weapons and bread whenever they needed it, and we'd toss in Ant-Man and the Wasp just for the sheer lunacy of it."

"Here were several personalities that were designed to be solo heroes," observed Kirby, "and we had to produce an effective portrayal of them working together—closely. Of course, they'd argue. They might even come close to killing each other, but the idea worked and we managed to make a convincing story out of a very improbable situation."

But it couldn't last. A monster like the Hulk simply didn't belong in a group that included a Norse God and two sophisticated scientist-heroes like Iron Man and Giant-Man.

"One great thing about The Avengers team is the fact that we could always change the line-up of heroes," Lee explained. "We were able to send Iron Man on vacation and have Captain America come in to replace him. Then we had them kick out the Hulk because he became too unmanageable. Since kicking a Hulk out isn't easy to do, it became the basis for an action-packed story."


HAVING THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE, THE HULK GETS IN THE FIRST BLOW, A THUNDERING LEFT WHICH COULD FELL A BULL ELEPHANT! BUT THE THING IS MERELY TOPPLED OFF BALANCE FOR A SECOND...
ARGHHH! IT'S LIKE HITTING A STONE WALL!
POW!

The Hulk and The Thing "rumble" in *Fantastic Four* #12.

The Hulk effectively abandoned the group in *Avengers* #3. His battle with Thor from that story was expanded in *Journey into Mystery* #112 a year later.

Thor was arguably the most powerful figure in the expanding Marvel Universe at that time, but even his prowess relative to the Hulk was a debatable point.

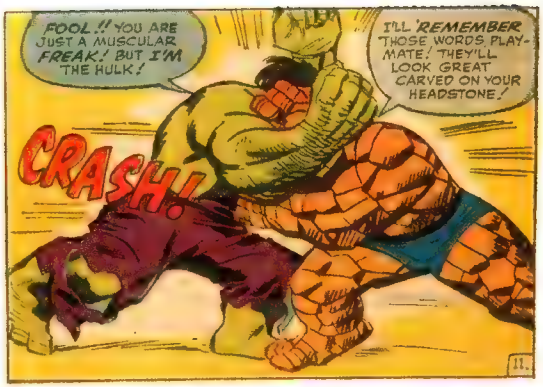
"I would have to guess that Thor is stronger, only because he *is* a god and probably can't be killed," mused Lee. "I thought of him as invulnerable. I would think that with his hammer and everything, he'd probably beat the Hulk. But what's interesting with the Hulk is the more he fights and the more he's beaten, the stronger he gets. So maybe it would be a draw."

The Avengers storyline resurfaces in the blockbuster two-part Hulk versus Thing face-off in *Fantastic Four* #25 and #26. Seeking revenge on the Avengers, who have replaced him with Captain America, and accepted Rick Jones into their group, the Hulk attacks Manhattan, and once again confronts the Fantastic Four.

This is the beginning of the classic Hulk, the one who

Fantastic Four
25 APR.
MARVEL 12¢
A MARVEL SUPER-SPECTACULAR!
THIS IS THE BIG ONE! "THE INCREDIBLE HULK VERSUS The THING!
PAGE AFTER PAGE OF PULSE-POUNDING THRILLS!!
THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY!

The Hulk and Thing "duke" it out again in *Fantastic Four* #25 (Marvel Apr 1964).


FOOL!! YOU ARE JUST A MUSCULAR FREAK! BUT I'M THE HULK!
I'LL 'REMEMBER THOSE WORDS PLAY-MATE! THEY'LL LOOK GREAT CARVED ON YOUR HEADSTONE!
CRASH!

The sheer power of Kirby's style is perfectly demonstrated in this panel from *Fantastic Four* #25.

transforms under stress or when angry. As if to make the point that the old Hulk is forever gone, Kirby has him demolish the Gamma-ray device through which Banner controlled his violent transformations. No longer would the Hulk be a force of nature Bruce Banner could summon at will. Now the green-skinned goliath drove events, just as he had in the beginning when nightfall evoked the primal change. Here Lee and Kirby were reverting back to the original conception of the Hulk as a dangerous unpredictable monster, who also functioned as a sympathetic demi-hero.

"The Hulk, I feel, is someone who is inside all of us," Kirby explained, "the ability to transcend our limitations when the need arises. I saw an article where a woman lifted the back of a Cadillac because her little kid was trapped under the tire. It suddenly came to me that in desperation, we can all do that—we can knock down walls. We can do feats of strength that would amaze us: Bend steel. We can go berserk... He's the ruthlessness inside all of us. I mean, a suddenly unreasoning explosive personality. Whatever the Hulk was at the beginning I got from that incident."

As for the Hulk versus Thing rematch, Kirby understood that when you got past the Thing's fighting heart, it was no contest.

"I feel the Hulk's strength is unlimited for some damn reason I don't understand," confessed Kirby. "It's just unlimited and when I had him fight with the Thing I felt the Hulk broke it off at a point where he hadn't fully tested his strength. One of the questions that I always get from fans is, 'Who's stronger, the Hulk or the Thing?' I think it's kind of a silly question, but after some thought, it would have to be the Hulk. He has a well of energy that he draws on that's almost endless. I think everybody has hidden reserves of strength that they're not aware of."

Here Kirby and Lee clearly saw eye to eye:

"Deep down in my heart," Lee wrote, "I felt the Hulk had the edge. I saw him as a little larger, more muscular, and far more savage and embittered. Yet I like to think that the Thing is faster, cleverer, and more innovative, which should serve to make them both equally effective in a

A Hulk puppet was used by the Mad Thinker and the Puppet Master in *Fantastic Four* #100 (Jul 1970).

drag-out fight."

Yet when it came down to it, both creators understood that neither Marvel man-monster could be allowed to actually lose.

"I decided to have them battle it out in such a way that fans of either character would be somewhat satisfied," noted Lee. "It wasn't easy, but I worked out a methodology whereby neither character actually won or lost, but even the loser emerges with new luster and glory. Perhaps I'm proudest of 'The Thing vs. the Hulk' because we managed to fashion a story with an unforgettable battle—and yet it's a conflict virtually without a villain."

Fans loved the evolving Hulk. From a dismal failure, he shot to the top of a list of Marvel characters Lee and Goodman wanted to grant ongoing strips.

"I was always crazy about him," said Lee, "because I was always proud that we were able to make a hero out of a monster."

"The Hulk worked all the time, really," added Kirby. "The lapse had something to do with the publishing business."

Later in 1964, Lee and Steve Ditko reunited to produce a new Hulk strip in the back of *Tales to Astonish*, where he had almost been dumped two years before. But now he was a hit, and would soon help push his old Avengers teammate, Giant-Man, out of the book.

Within a year, Jack Kirby reclaimed his creation, replacing Ditko in mid-story. But after a while, Kirby began doing layouts for a new generation of Hulk interpreters. The first was Mike Esposito.

"Kirby always had these very brilliant ideas for the weird, grotesque," Esposito once said. "That's why the Hulk is Kirby's. Kirby is really the Hulk. Stan definitely developed it with him, but the thinking was really from Kirby's head. The whole idea, the Frankenstein monster that the Hulk looked [like] at the beginning."

Other new Hulk artists included Bob Powell, Gil Kane and Sub-Mariner creator Bill Everett. Everett lasted the longest of this group, but he and Lee struggled over Everett's interpretation of The Hulk, especially his face.

"You notice he's a little bit different in each issue because Stan kept saying, 'Well, this issue let's try to do him this way. Make this change. Make that change,'" recalled Everett. "So eventually he said, 'Well, do him the way you want to.' And I was doing it that way when I stopped doing him and started doing Doc Strange."

A returning Gil Kane also found it hard to please Lee.

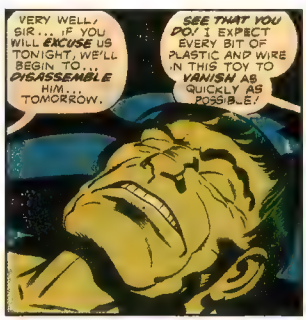
"Jack developed the Hulk clearly as a character based on Boris Karloff," Kane observed. "He looked like Boris Karloff. He had Karloff's head and structure around the face and everything. Even the hairstyle. At first, it was that clump of hair that Frankenstein has on the top of his head. As he went on, [Lee] started to say, 'Why can't the guy be good looking? Why does he have to be so ugly?' He would ask me that all the time. 'I'm doing it just like Jack,' [Kane retorted]. [Lee] says, 'Well, I want it a little better looking.'"

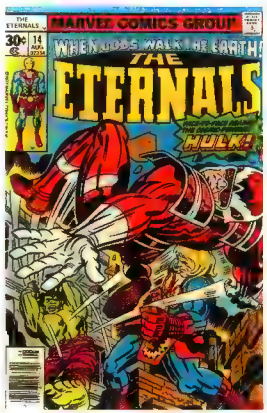
Soon, Kane quit. "Marie Severin, after me, took over the Hulk," he added, "and began doing this new Hulk—a Hulk with a nice face, a small nose and a sort of pleasant heroic Kirby head."

"Y'know," remarked Lee, "it's funny how the Hulk changed over the years—far more than the Thing or most other Marvel characters have changed. When we first dreamed him up, I felt that he should be a monster—but an appealing one, a handsome monster, if you can conceive of such a thing. You'll notice how his face, in many panels, is not really that grotesque. He could almost be the bouncer at your neighborhood bar and grill. That's the way we saw him in the early days of Hulkdom."

No matter what interpretations came along, Jack Kirby's Hulk remained the standard by which all subsequent Hulks were judged.

Yet Kirby rarely drew the Hulk after the sixteen *Tales to Astonish* stories he did with Lee. But when he did, he depicted a cruder, more brutish version than before, as if Kirby stopped seeing his creation as a character, but as some mindless mass of meat and muscle. A Hulk puppet was used by the Mad Thinker and the Puppet Master in *Fantastic Four* #100 (Jul


VERY WELL, SIR... IF YOU WILL EXCUSE US TONIGHT, WE'LL BEGIN TO... DISASSEMBLE HIM... TOMORROW.
SEE THAT YOU DO! I EXPECT EVERY BIT OF PLASTIC AND WIRE IN THIS TOY TO VANISH AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!



A cosmic-powered Hulk android rampaged through a two-part Eternals story in 1977. This was Kirby's Hulk swan song, something he did only to boost failing *Eternals*' sales.

Three interpretations of The Hulk: Marie Severin, Gil Kane and the standard by which all will be compared, Jack Kirby.

1970). A cosmic-powered Hulk android rampaged through a two-part Eternals story in 1977. This was Kirby's Hulk swan song, something he did only to boost failing Eternals' sales.

"It was a gimmick," Kirby admitted. "It was a robot because I felt it was a different way to use the Hulk. If I'd used the ordinary Hulk it would have been an entirely different type of approach and an entirely different story. I didn't want that. I wanted an approach where the Eternals were the main characters. Therefore if I'd used the Hulk as the Hulk then he would have been adding to the cast and I wanted a Hulk story in which the Eternals were the principal characters. A robot Hulk is a robot Hulk. To be contended with, he is not part of the main cast."

But whether by accident or design, Jack Kirby was done with the true Hulk in 1966, when he penciled his final Hulk tale, "Less Than Monster, More Than Man" in *Tales to Astonish* #83.

For his part, Lee stayed with the green man-monster until he abandoned scripting comics in 1972. The Hulk had completed his most important transformation—from Marvel's first failure to one of its most successful characters.

Lee once wrote, "One of my favorite explanations for the Hulk's popularity is the fact that people always cheer for the underdog. And, despite his strength and obvious lack of diffidence, our jolly green giant always seems to have the odds against him no matter what's happening. But, in one respect he's got a lot of class. He won't let anybody push him around. I guess you wouldn't either if you weighed half a ton and stood almost seven feet tall."

Looking back on the formative Hulk, you have to wonder if, back in 1961, when Martin Goodman requested the two men to stitch together something that would appeal to the kids who bought all those Aurora Frankenstein monster model kits and watched Boris Karloff's portrayal of Victor Frankenstein's tragic creation on TV, if they didn't consider reviving the Frankenstein monster himself. Both creators remembered Dick Briefer's brilliant 1940s Frankenstein comic book. In fact, that green-skinned monster was sometimes referred to as "that big hulk" in those old tales.

"I feel there are certain characters that will never die," mused Kirby. "We'll tell them in different versions for the rest of the centuries. Dracula will never die. Frankenstein. They live inside of us...."

But it was the Karloff Frankenstein Goodman wanted to emulate, not Dick Briefer's, nor even Mary Shelly's. And both creators were unquestionably inspired by that interpretation, and no other.

"Anyone who had ever seen the original *Frankenstein* movie, starring Boris Karloff as the monster," wrote Lee, "probably has a soft spot in his or her heart for the sewed-together strong man whom Karloff so brilliantly portrayed. I know I do. As far as I was concerned, the tragic, misunderstood monster was actually the hero of that movie; he was the one who most aroused my sympathy."

"*Frankenstein* is an undying classic; it's timeless," asserted Kirby, who claimed it was his favorite film. "And that sort of thing makes a big impression on any young person. It wasn't very scary, really, but it was very powerfully done and dramatically acted, and I enjoy that sort of thing."

Asked about Boris Karloff's contribution to *Frankenstein*, Jack Kirby had his own take on it.

"I don't think Karloff had anything to do with the monster. I think Karloff was Karloff, and not the image. I think the image is what we see, but we never see Karloff. We never knew Karloff; Karloff was always a mystery to me. I sure as hell was impressed by the monster, and I think they were two different images. That monster will live forever on the screen; you're always going to see Frankenstein, but Karloff I think will always remain a mystery. We create images, and they just continue on."

So it was with Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's immortal, Incredible Hulk.

Grateful acknowledgement is given to the innumerable interviewers from whose works this oral history has been constructed.

Deep F

The Cinematic and Comic Bo

by Michael Kronenberg

I first encountered Bob Tinnell in 1997 after seeing his film Frankenstein and Me *at a convention. The film's sincerity and craftsmanship impressed me. What really took me aback was the movie's obvious love of the classic horror genre. I knew this film had to be done by a true fan. I met Bob after viewing the film and found him to be energetic, intelligent and very down to earth.*

Over a year ago, Bob told me he was trying his hand at comic book writing. I knew he would do well, but after reading his first graphic novel The Black Forest *I was truly astonished. And obviously, I wasn't alone, the book; co-written by Todd Livingston and drawn by Neil Vokes sold out in a month.*

I've had the privilege of reading some of Bob's scripts for his upcoming projects, and he has some exciting things in the works, unlike anything that's out today. I once recall that Stephen King said after reading Clive Barker's first collection of short stories "I've seen the future of horror and his name is Clive Barker." Well, with respect to the theme of this issue of CBM*...I've seen the future of horror in comics and his name is Robert Tinnell.*

Bob Tinnell (center) on the set of his feature film *Believe* (2000).

Comic Book Marketplace: What comics did you read when you were growing up?

Robert Tinnell: Owing to the scattered nature of comics' distribution in those days, it was pretty hit and miss—but there were several books I tried very hard to keep up with. *Tomb of Dracula* was my all-time favorite (as well as *Dracula Lives*—I dug the Marvel b&w's). I always enjoyed *The Avengers* and *Batman* and *Detective*. To a lesser extent *JLA*—especially whenever there was a crossover with the *JSA*. I was fascinated by the Golden Age heroes. I was into *The Defenders* for a while. And I can remember individual books that I came across from time to time that really struck me. Hell, I can remember going wild over some issues of *Dark Shadows* and *Boris Karloff Presents*. I don't know if that's a good thing or not!

CBM: Are there any particular comic creators that influenced you?

Tinnell: Oh, absolutely, although at that point I had no clue I'd ever write a comic—I was always dead-set on getting into film. But yeah, I mean, Neal Adams was a revelation to me. I wish I could say Kirby and Ditko but by the time I was old enough to read comics the Marvel heyday was long past. But Adams, man oh man, he could tell a story and he made it all seem so—I don't know—grown-up, I guess.

Then with *Manhunter* Walt Simonson and Archie Goodwin really put the zap on my head—both visually and as story telling. Roy Thomas was certainly an influence.

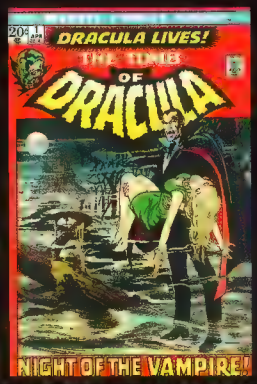
But I guess the big, slamming, brain-warping influence would have to be Marv Wolfman—and of course, Gene Colan. Hell, I think Wolfman has influenced just about everything I've ever written in one way or another. Hollywood is still stealing from this guy—although I'm not sure they realize it. He was so far ahead of the curve in exploring the Dracula/vampire mythos.

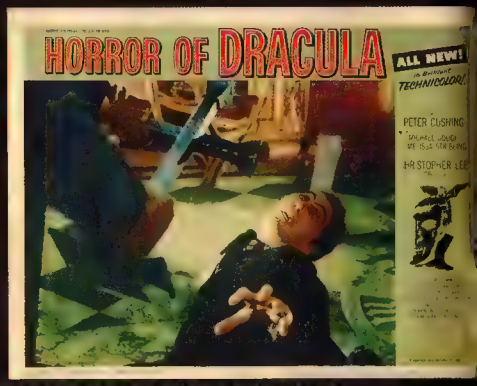
I think I'm still being influenced—in having the bar raised if nothing else. Moore, Gaiman, Bendis, Eric Powell—I know, I know, it's de rigueur to hear these names bandied about—but it only happens because they are that damned good.

FOCUS:

ook Vision of Robert Tinnell

Two of Tinnell's current efforts, the forthcoming *The Wicked West* (Image 2004) and the recently sold out *The Black Forest* (Image 2004). Both books written with Todd Livingston and drawn by Neil Vokes represent the fascinating genre mixes of horror /the old west and horror/history.





High praise: Goodwin and Simonson's *Manhunter* (1974), Wolfman and Colan's *Tomb of Dracula* (1972) and Terence Fisher's *Horror of Dracula* (1958) have been three of Tinnell's greatest influences.

CBM: I think Goodwin and Simonson's *Manhunter* put the zap on a lot of people. It's one of the most influential series of the seventies.

You grew up a classic horror movie fan. Can you talk about the impact these films had on you?

Tinnell: They were hugely influential. I can remember the moments themselves and the way they made me feel. At seven I was obsessed with Lugosi's *Dracula* (1931)—I wanted to go to the castle and hang out! The visuals captivated me. From there, the original *Frankenstein* did a number on me, as well as *The Invisible Man*. And don't get me started on the Hammers! *Horror of Dracula* and *Brides of Dracula* shook me to my core. In later years, George Romero would become the pivotal figure, as it were. He, Terry Fisher, Mario Bava, Dario Argento and James Whale were most responsible for my corruption! Romero's *Martin* changed my life—and *Dawn of the Dead* played no small part—though I'm not into gore so much.

The thrill of horror films for me is that good ones continue to turn up and I became a kid all over again. I recently saw Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General* uncut for the first time. What a brilliant picture. I love M. Night Shyamalan. Val Lewton.

There are so many of these films that affected me—*I Walked with a Zombie*, *The Cat People*, *Suspiria*, *The Uninvited*, *The Innocents*, *The Haunting*, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*. Hell, a crappy little movie like *The Invisible Ghost* is still with me!

Stop me. Just stop me now.

CBM: Tell us a little about your childhood. Where were born and what were your interests?

Tinnell: I was born and raised around Fairmont, WV, where segments of my family have lived since the 1760s, so you never really leave. I lived a few years in Rocky Mount, VA as well. As a kid I was pretty much as I am now. I loved horror movies, comic books, football, camping and fishing. I was more into magic then. Later I was more into girls and parties. I still like girls and parties—but my wife and kids tend to monopolize my time…

LEFT: Tinnell's tour-de-force, *Frankenstein and Me* (1996). BELOW: Tinnell (wearing sunglasses) directing Malcolm McDowell in *Kids of the Round Table* (1995).

CBM: You've directed several successful films (*Frankenstein and Me*, *Believe*, *Kids of the Round Table* and *Airspeed*). What is it like being in charge of a production? It seems very high pressure and stressful.

Tinnell: You know, for me, the stress has always been in the financing—the waiting to get it to go. But the shoots themselves don't really stress me at all, unless there's some inept person on the show screwing things up. That will stress me. I actually enjoy directing, and I love working in the editing.

I've always enjoyed being on a set. Even as a kid, as a production assistant. I do miss that. I worked a lot in the music video era on the videos themselves and that was a blast. Just shooting constantly, getting a crash course in the evolving technology.

ABOVE and BELOW: Samples of Tinnell's upcoming project *The Terry Sharp Stories*. An amalgam of *The Saint* and *Curse of the Demon*. Art by Adrian Salmon.

CBM: Any interesting anecdotes you can share with us from the films?

Tinnell: I feel pretty stupid on this one. I'm sure there is a ton and I'm blanking.

I guess the moment I walked onto the set that was a replica of the windmill from *Brides of Dracula* in *Frankenstein and Me*. A really overwhelming moment.

I can't believe there aren't more to talk about.

CBM: You've worked with some seasoned actors, Burt Reynolds, Joe Mantegna and Malcolm McDowell. How was it as a young director working with them?

Tinnell: In each of these cases it was pure joy. Ditto with Michael Ironside. Burt is, of course, a very good director in his own right. And Michael knows his way around as well. You tell them what lens you're using and they just know how far they can move and so on. Makes your job so easy. Malcolm was a jewel. He loved the script and the character and we bonded very quickly. We had fun—which is the way it should be. And Joe is a pro, pure and simple. You work with guys like these and you see very quickly what sets them apart from the average actor.

A page from Tinnell, Livingston, and Vokes' follow-up to *The Black Forest*, the atmospheric *The Wicked West*. Due out later this year.

CBM: Any film projects on the horizon?

Tinnell: My son, Jack, just turned five, and is autistic—

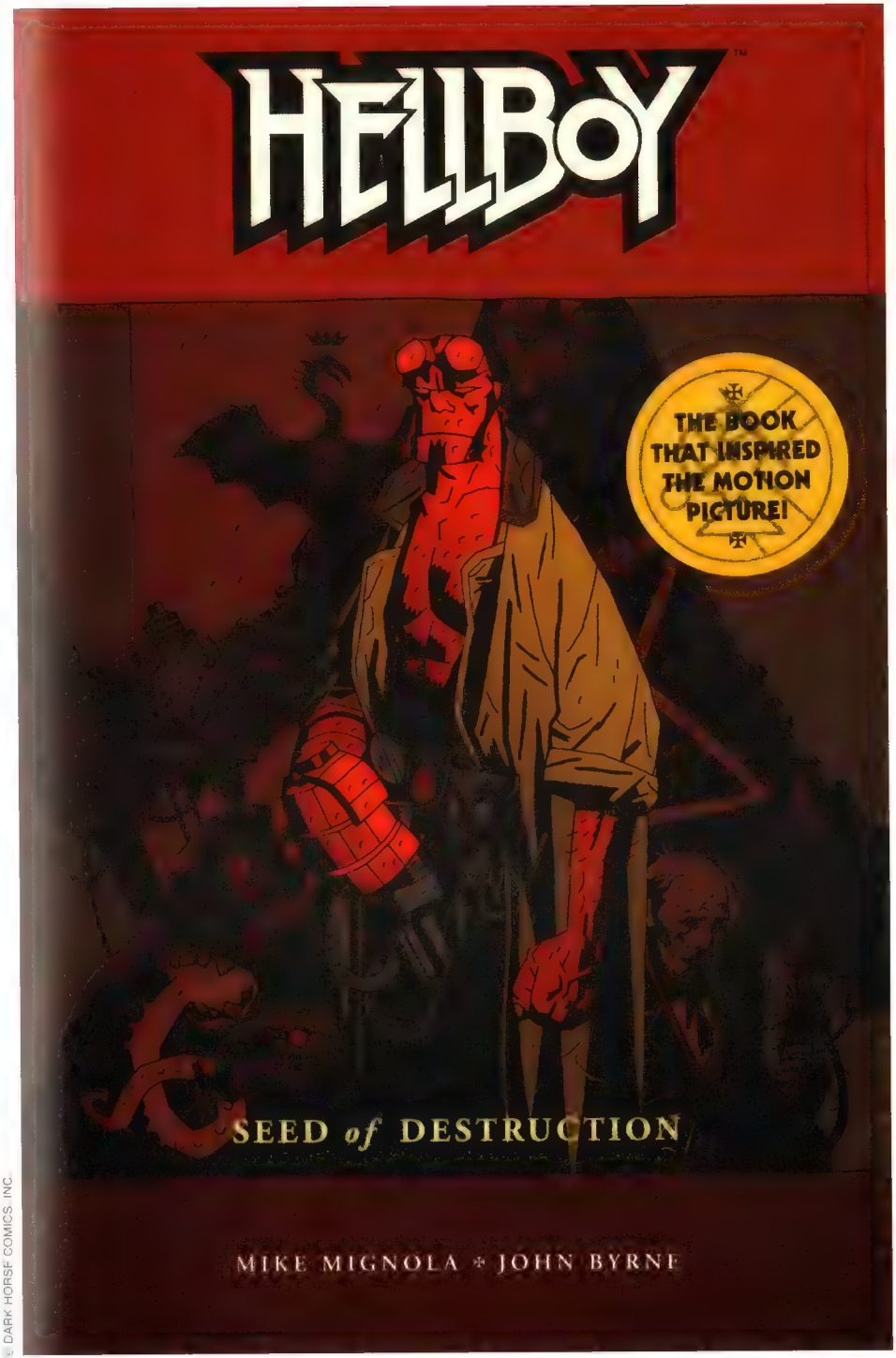
Continued on page 64

IF THIS GOES BADLY TELL EVERYONE I DIED TRYING TO PROTECT YOU.
HOW CAN YOU JOKE AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
I WASN'T JOKING
HELLO IS THERE SOMETHING YOU PEOPLE WANT?

THE LONG DARK [HORSE] NIGHT OF THE SOUL: An overview of DARK HORSE

by Bill Baker

Comics' horror line



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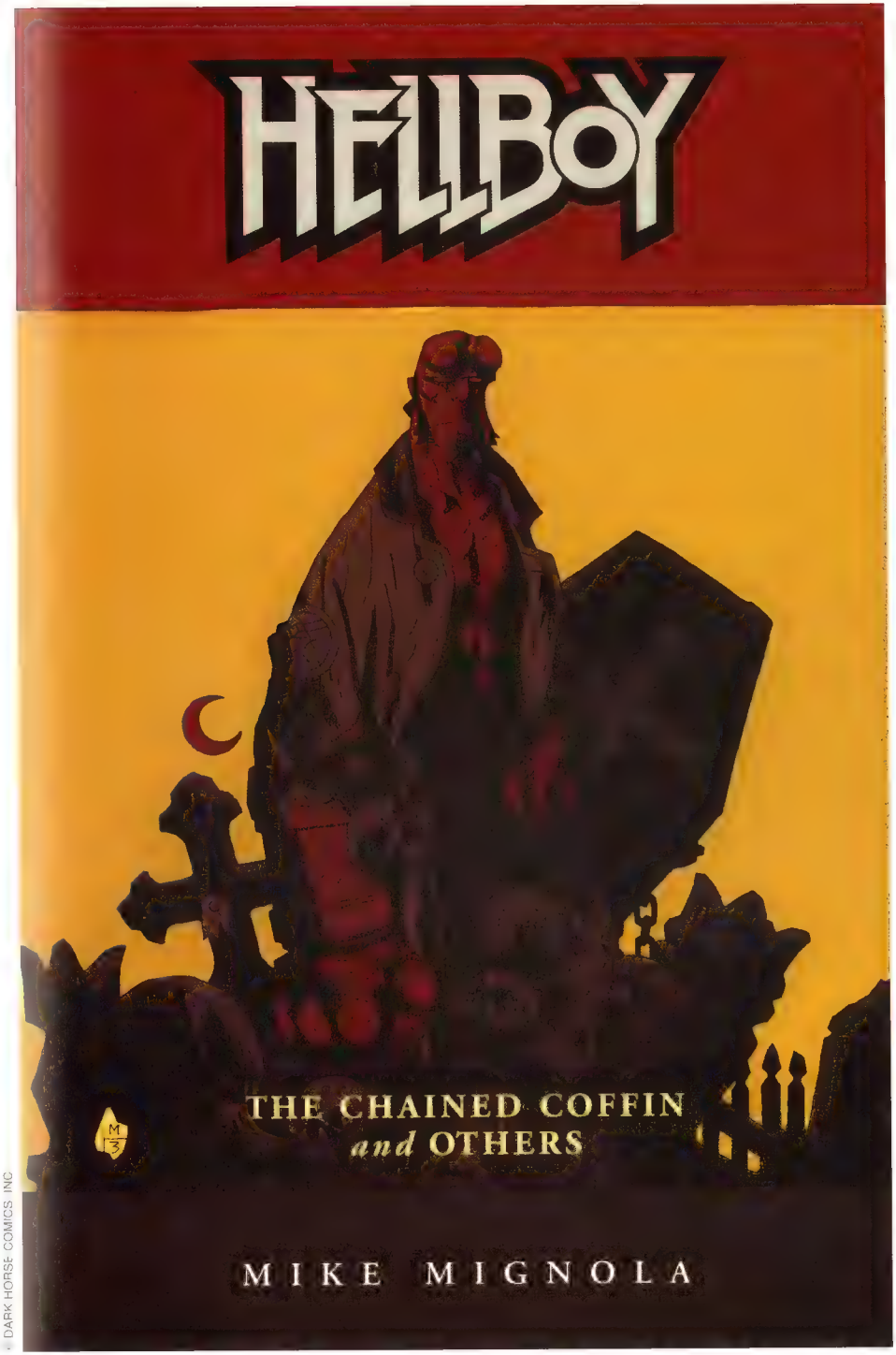
Even if you lived under a rock with assorted grubs, worms and other creepy-crawly denizens of dim and dank abodes, you'd have been hard pressed to not have heard about at least one of Dark Horse's horror titles—quite understandable, considering how well the film based on Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* series has been promoted this past year. Still, as this article will demonstrate, *Hellboy* is but one entry in a rapidly growing line published by "the Horse" which plumbs the darker regions of the human imagination and soul.

While at first glance this might seem to be new territory for this well-established "indy" publisher to investigate, the fact is that there's always been a touch of horror present in Dark Horse's lineup. If this seems like a baseless claim, consider for a moment the basic premise of the title which first garnered the imprint its first real notice from critics and fans alike: Paul Chadwick's quirky and

sublime *Concrete*. That book's central conceit—that a human who was captured by aliens and subsequently had his brain transplanted into a robotic body composed of an organic rocky material, escapes his abductors only to find himself trapped in his perambulating prison and doomed to live as a freak amongst his fellow humans—is as firmly based in Edgar Allen Poe's brand of psychological horror as it is in pulp sci-fi trappings. And that delicate balance between those two genres and the two emotions which they each evoke—a sense of terror and that of wonder, respectively—has been maintained throughout each ensuing installment of the series. Where other creators might have been able to turn out some entertaining and perhaps even touching action-adventure tales, Chadwick instead has chosen to concentrate on the terrible loneliness and alienation this situation forced upon his central character while putting him through his paces in circumstances both extraordinary and



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mundane. So, while it's true that Chadwick's tales provide plenty of opportunity for the performance of amazing deeds by Concrete—such as attempts to swim across oceans or climb impossibly dangerous peaks—the essential heart of his story remains firmly rooted in the effect that these experiences have on the psyche of the titular character and those surrounding him. Ironically, the longer the series went on, the more human and humane Concrete becomes; his curse has transformed him not only physically and psychologically, but also spiritually in a real and meaningful way. Even by the end of his first adventure, Concrete is a changed man in just about every sense that can be imagined.

That same theme, albeit twisted and repackaged in the frame of a very different animal, also underlies and powers the escapades of the aforementioned *Hellboy* series. I suspect that Mignola might laugh off, or even disagree with, the observation that,

despite all of its pulp horror and proto-superheroic trappings, the main character arc of Hellboy is one of self discovery and personal transformation. However heady that might sound, don't be misled by it; the main purpose of this series and the real intention of its author is to provide the reader with a heady and healthy dose of thrills, chills and big punch ups with various monsters. In other words, really, it's all about sheer spectacle and pure entertainment. The higher theme alluded to above only becomes apparent after one reads and rereads and then considers long and hard the psychological movement of Hellboy and the other characters over the course of the nine trades currently available, and certainly does not deter nor diminish a whit the enjoyment for the casual reader looking for a bit of fun.

In fact, "fun" might just be the perfect watchword for *Hellboy*. Essentially a hodgepodge arising

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from Mignola's long-standing love of classic horror stories (especially those of H. P. Lovecraft) and the swift action and broad characterization inherent to pulps (as exemplified in the adventures of Doc Savage, the Spider and the Shadow, in particular), all combined with his fascination with the world's folk lore and mythology, Hellboy strides through a world filled to bursting with haunted houses, Aryan criminals plotting to revive the Nazi nightmare, and hidden laboratories filled with arcane, world-destroying devices, all the while cracking wise and cutting to the bottom line: "Where's the monster, and how hard do I have to hit it to send it back to hell?" It's a refreshingly straightforward approach to dealing with the genre, and particularly telling considering the nature and origins of Hellboy.

On the eve of Hitler and Nazi Germany's fall, a group of Teutonic sorcerers enact a ritual to summon forth a demon

to aid their failing cause. Just as these plans seem to come to fruition, a group of specially trained allied forces invades their stronghold, capturing both the Nazis and the creature which has answered their call. Thus Hellboy, then a child-like red demon sporting a pair of devilish horns and an immensely powerful rock-like right hand, and the entire world are saved for democracy. Hellboy's quickly taken under the wing of Trevor Bruttenholm, an expert in the supernatural, who raises him as his own son, which leads Hellboy to adopt what can only be called very American ways and attitudes. Still, he is haunted by the question of whom and what he is, and how his exterior belies his internal nature. Eventually, Hellboy becomes the prime operative for the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense (or BPRD), a shadowy organization headed up by Bruttenholm to investigate and intervene in situations which involve supernatural threats to

life and liberty the world over. Hellboy is aided in his work by a small group of individuals almost as strange as he is, including Liz Sherman, a pyrokinetic who has great difficulty controlling her "gift" and is haunted by the terrible memories and consequences arising from its use; Abe Sapien, an amphibious creature whose body, which somewhat resembles the Creature from the Black Lagoon, houses a sensitive and literate soul; and Roger the Homunculus, a creature created long ago for unknown reasons by unidentified parties in a long-forgotten hidden laboratory, who has been given life and purpose by his fellow BPRD operatives.

These and other agents, human and otherwise, join Hellboy in his battles against vampires, werewolves, ghosts and elder gods in the graphic novels *Seeds of Destruction*, *Wake the Devil*, *The Chained Coffin and Others*, *The Right Hand of Doom*, and *Conqueror Worm*, as well as prose novels

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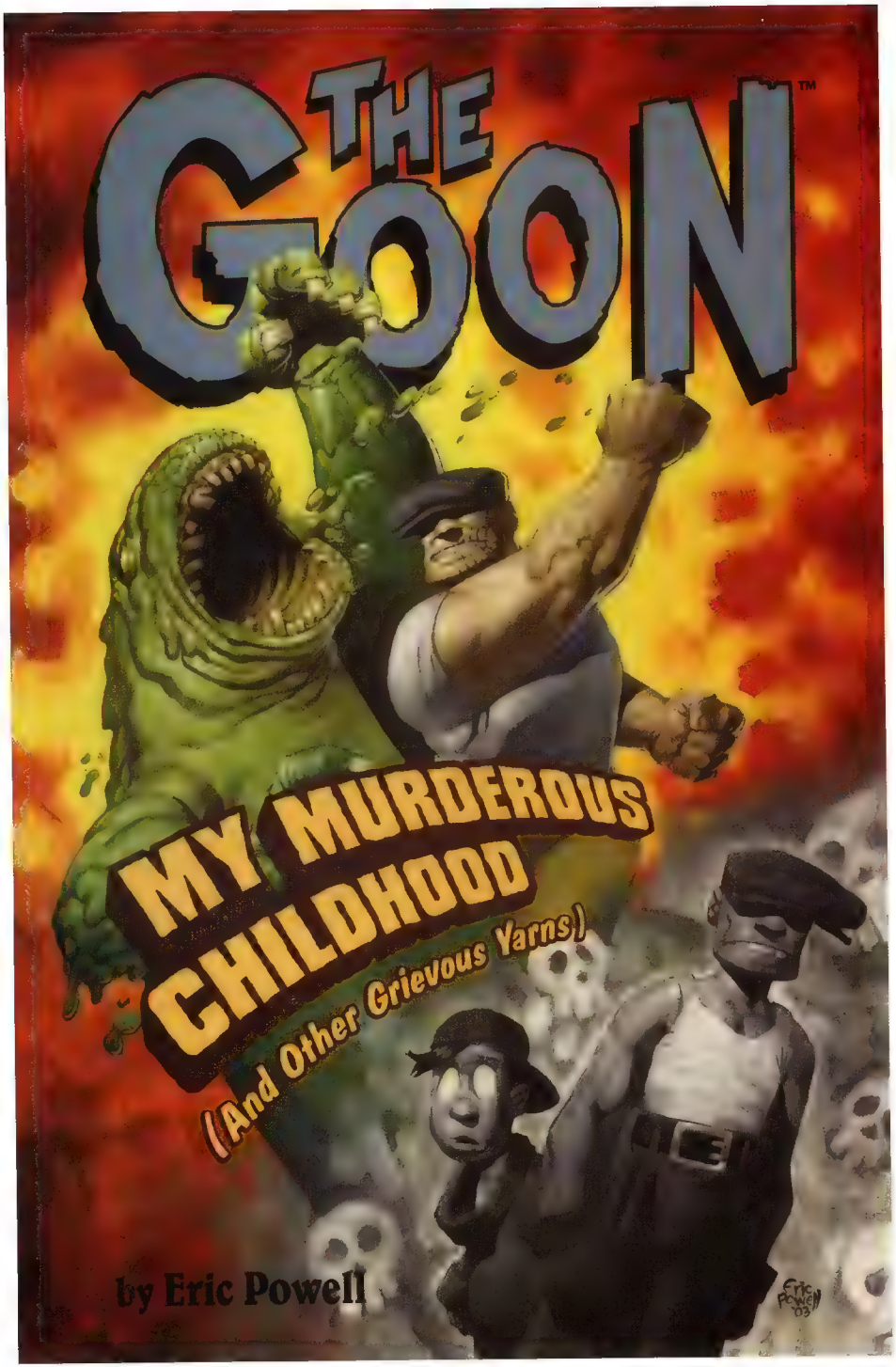
and short story collections. Eventually, after Hellboy discovers his true purpose and nature, which leads him to part ways with the organization which has been the only family he's known, the remaining operatives begin to pursue their own adventures in the spin-off *BPRD* series, while Hellboy seeks his own way in the world. And while it's true that some of these later adventures have been drawn or even written by creators other than Mignola, they all ably capture the adventurous spirit, dark humor and fine design sensibility that Mike Mignola is justifiably famous for, and which have defined and driven Hellboy to become one of the most acclaimed and longest running series in the Dark Horse stable.

But that's not to suggest that it's the only project they've issued which has caught the eye and captured the imagination of both the comic aficionados and the general public. Unless one wants to discount numerous rave reviews and



notices from a number of mainstream publications, winning an International Horror Guild Award and being nominated for four Eisners after but a year of being released under the Dark Horse aegis, it's probably safe to say that Eric Powell's *The Goon* has arrived in a big way. This beautifully drawn and laugh-out-loud macabre series might be too new for this reviewer to draw forth any hard conclusions regarding its deeper thematic meanings, but there's no doubt concerning its delivery of enjoyment to the reader. *The Goon* concerns itself with the life and times of a hard man trying to make his way in a harder world, one overrun and largely ruled by not just zombies and werewolves and mad scientists and man-sized talking spiders who cheat at cards, but also by the cruel and capricious nature of the common man. As a result—and perhaps even more than in other books featuring what are typically called "antiheroes"—no one is without their glaring faults. The lead

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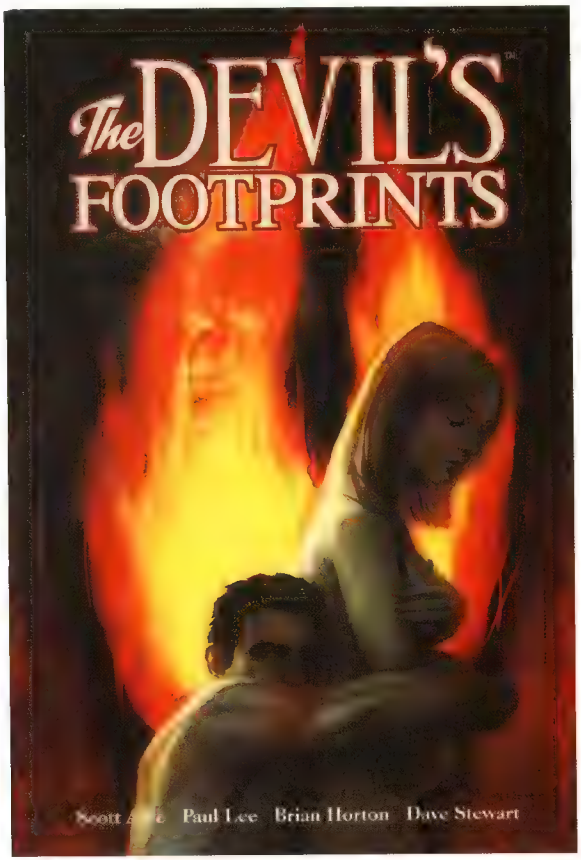
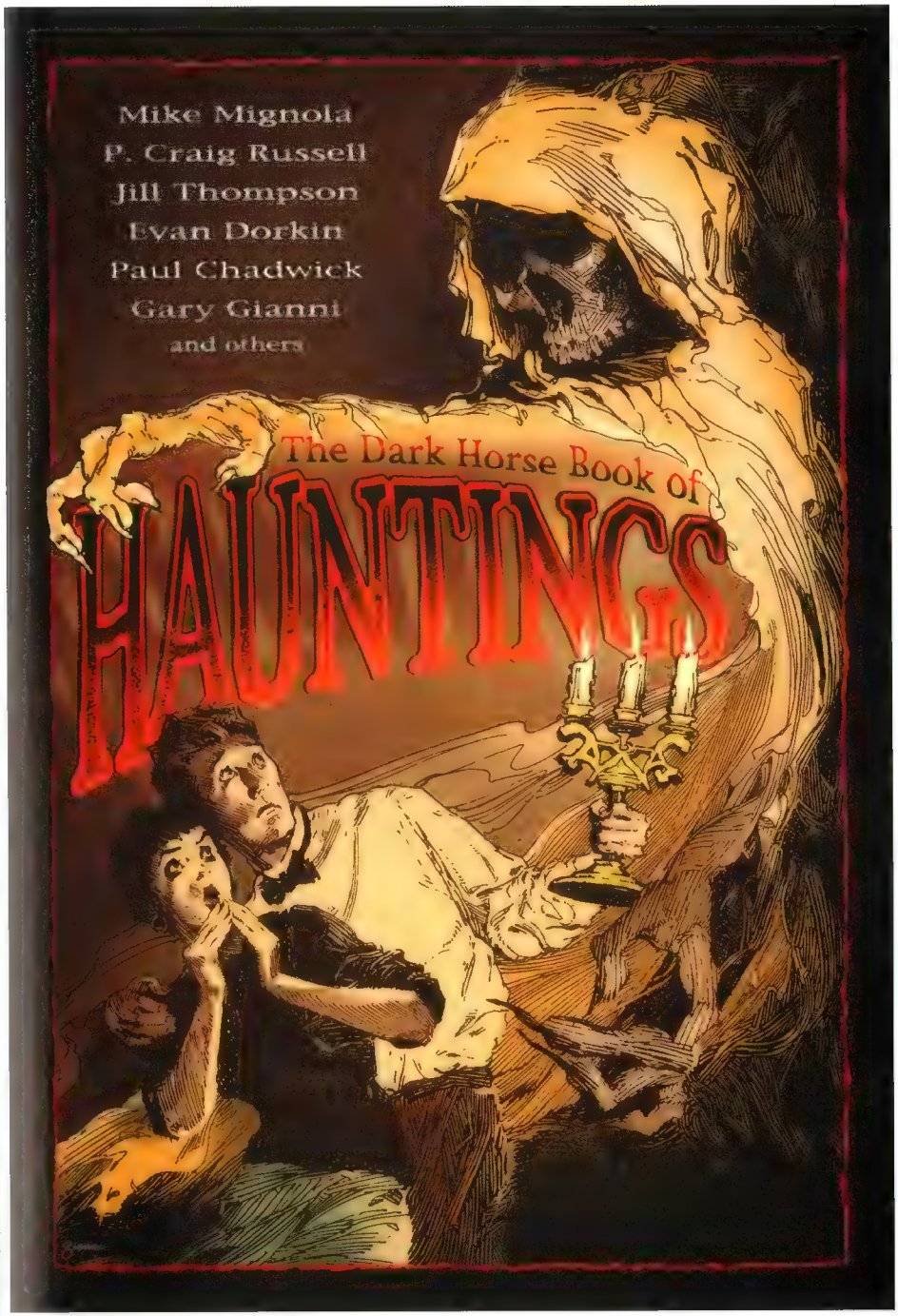
character runs a criminal organization, ostensibly working as the enforcer for the mobster he killed as a child, while his best friend and right-hand man, the feisty and diminutive Franky, is a cad at the best of times. Together, they rule over a section of city that would make the worst of slums seem a paradise, and quite often the characters do the right thing for the worst of reasons. That Powell is able to not only pull all this off, making it both entertaining and truly funny, is a real tribute to his powers as a creator.

Perhaps the best way to describe this heady and hilarious concoction is to imagine the visual love child which would result from mixing Jack Kirby's powerful figures and layouts with a liberal dose of Will Elder's cartoony realism, before leavening it all with scripting that's close kin to Harvey Kurtzman's efforts on *Mad* and *Little Annie Fanny* and setting it in a world that's equal parts *Dawn of the Dead* and *Deliverance*. A weird and strange mixture, true, but one which doesn't do real justice to the sheer audacity and bravado Powell brings to the page. Nor does it really capture the lunatic pacing, subtly smooth storytelling or the scatological, multi-layered humor offered by each issue of the series. While it's true that this series is not for the weak of heart, and certainly not for all tastes, once sampled it's hard to resist the pull of *The Goon*.

And much the same can be said for the rest of the imprint's horror line up. Whether it's one of the several series written by Steve Niles, such as the gumshoe-gone-to-hell noir of the *Cal MacDonald* books or the Bradbury-inflected chill of his *Freaks in the Heartland* mini-series (gloriously visualized by the insanely talented Kelley Jones and Greg Ruth, respectively); the epic mythos of Fabian Nicieza and Stefano Raffaele's *The Blackburne Covenant*; the beautifully understated *The Devil's Footprints* by line editor Scott Allie, Paul Lee and Brian Horton; or the excellent series of anthologies such as *The Dark Horse Book of Hauntings* and *Book of Witchcraft*, which feature tales





by Mignola and Chadwick, alongside tales by P. Craig Russell, Jill Thompson and Gary Gianni among a host of other notable creators; readers looking to satisfy their craving for supernatural thrills would do well to seek out these and other horror bearing the Dark Horse logo.

DARK HORSE COMICS INC

The DC HORROR STORY: HE WAS EIGHT YEARS OLD and

by Dan Johnson

I have been a comic book fan since as far back as I can remember. I was lucky in that I had a lady in my life who was like an adopted second mother, Dot. Dot had been a dear friend of my parents long before I was even born. When she was growing up, Dot had read comic books and she passed along her love for them to her two sons, Jeff and Gary. She also passed along that passion for comics to me. When I started getting old enough to read, whenever she would come to visit my mother, she always brought comics for me.

One day, when I was eight years old, I came home from school and was delighted to find out that Dot had been by to see Mom, and she had left a big pile of comics for me on our kitchen table. I was excited, of course, as thoughts of snaring a new *Superman* or *Fantastic Four* raced through my head, or better yet, maybe Dot had dug out some of her own, older comic books as she sometimes did (these were books which, I realized much, much later on in life were books from DC's and Marvel's Silver Age and which would now be worth a small fortune). When I flipped through these comics, I didn't find the usual super-hero comics, though. Some of the books were from DC. One was called *Unexpected* and another was called *The Witching Hour*, and there were also a few of the old Charlton horror comics in the pile as well. Being eight, I flipped through the DC books first and was instantly freaked out by the stories, so much so that I put all of the books away and couldn't bring myself to read them again for some time. To say the least, the experience is one that scared the living heck out of me. Today I think of myself as a major fan of the horror genre, but I really didn't get into horror comics until much, much later in life, long after DC stopped publishing its line of horror books. I really can't say if it was this first, unexpected exposure to those horror comics as a kid that did it, or maybe the fact that for a long time, I couldn't see past super-heroes, but I tended to stay clear of any and all horror comics until junior high school.

To get a full understanding of these comics, you really have to go back to when it all started. That would be in the late 1960s, when DC Comics had a major problem on its hands. Mainly, it was finding its comics playing second fiddle to Marvel Comics line-up on the newsstands. Earlier in the decade, Marvel seemed like a non-entity with a slew of monster comics with titles like *Tales of Suspense* and *Journey Into Mystery*. While these books sported some of the wildest monsters to ever find their way onto the four color page, as well as some amazing artwork by the likes of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, they could hardly compete with DC's revival of super-heroes that included the Silver Age re-launch of the Flash, Green Lantern and Hawkman. But all that changed when Marvel started releasing their own gang of costumed crime-fighters, starting with *Fantastic Four* #1. It wasn't too long before the heroes of

SCARED SILLY!

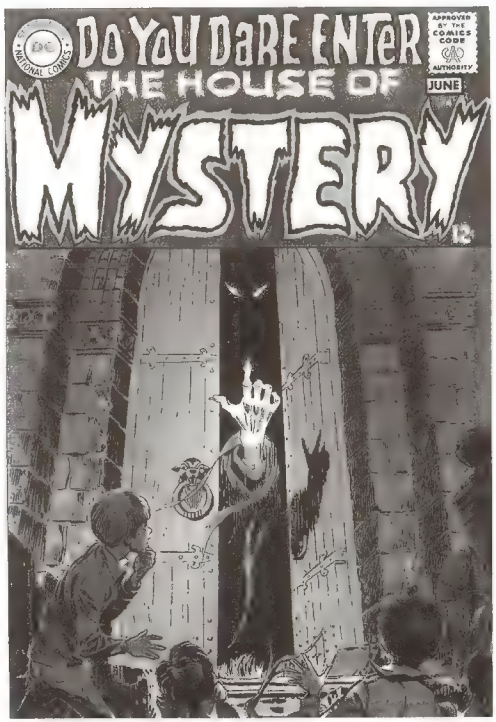
Marvel were going toe to toe with DC's top guns, and by the end of the decade, Marvel started winning comic book fans over.

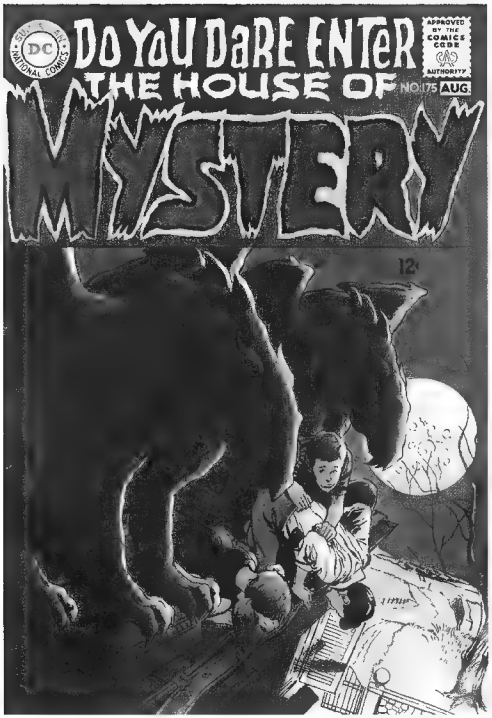
MOVE AHEAD, LOOK BACKWARDS

When Carmine Infantino came in as the new editorial director of DC Comics at the end of the decade, he understood something had to be done to counter Marvel's advancement on the comics rack. In a surprise move, Infantino reached back into a much cherished decade of comics and set DC on a path with a genre that Marvel had long abandoned as it discovered success with its super-heroes. I am speaking of the horror comic. But these weren't the giant monster and science fiction tales Marvel had done. Nope, these were books that had more in common with the EC Comics of old, and also with the black and white horror magazines that Warren was having huge success with at the time, *Creepy* and *Eerie*.

Infantino's logic was very sound, especially considering the horror boom that came along in this decade. Popular television shows included horror in its most serious forms (*The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*) and its more humorous forms (*The Munsters*, *The Addams Family*), the classic Universal monster films were being introduced to a whole new generation of fans via television and the leading non-comics newsstand purchase by kids was Warren's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (and numerous knock-offs that jumped on that magazine's bandwagon). Indeed, if anything could be considered hotter than super-heroes by the late 1960s, it was monsters and horror.

The first task for DC was to take three of the comics that had once competed with Marvel's old science fiction titles, give them an upgrade and point them in a new direction as mystery books. The first title to undergo this metamorphosis was *Tales of the Unexpected*, which simply became *Unexpected* with #105 (Feb 1968). The comic, which had featured stories similar to Marvel's own tales of alien encounters and adventures on other worlds, quickly started featuring stories of a different sort. Now the stories in *Unexpected* would generate excitement that stemmed from the world of the supernatural, under the editorship of Murray Boltinoff. As good as an editor as Boltinoff was (he did churn out some pretty decent issues of *Unexpected*, and launched two of the other titles we'll be discussing soon) the real fun was just getting started when one of the living legends of EC's glory days came on board at DC.





House of Secrets after a three year hiatus with #81 (Sep 1969). The three comics that would lay the cornerstone for DC's horror line were now open for business. All they needed were the perfect pitchmen to bring the readers in.

WAIT FOR THE HOST TO GREET YOU

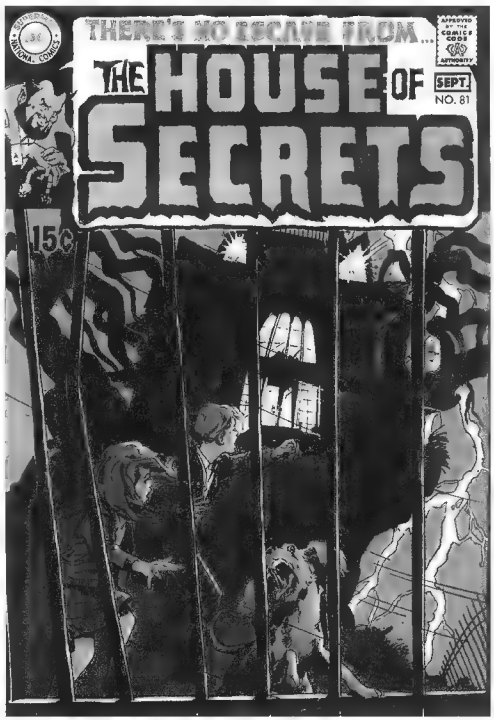
Like the classic stories that Orlando worked on for *Tales from the Crypt*, *Vault of Horror* and *Haunt of Fear*, most of DC's new line of horror comics would come with their own group of hosts. The idea of having a host introduce tales of fright wasn't anything new. Before EC Comics, there had been radio dramas like *The Inner Sanctum*, and by the time DC started up their line of horror books, local television stations around the country were running the now famous *Shock Theater* package, usually with a mad scientist, ghoul, vampire or other such horror themed character who could be counted on to set up the action for the viewer between commercial breaks. So, with DC forging a bold new chapter into the (under)world of horror comics, it was only natural that they would launch a group of characters that would introduce the stories and wrap things up at the end. The first efforts were less than perfect, but not without their charm. In *Unexpected*, readers could catch a tale hosted by the Mad Mod Witch (who was certainly a product of the decade that spawned her) and to a lesser degree there was Judge Gallows, a rather stern fellow who had all the charm of a small claims court judge (although he did have a really cool skull head gavel). Alas, these two failed to hit it off with readers, and like many a horror host on UHF stations at this time, they were dropped, only to be remembered in precious childhood memories. Eventually, *Unexpected* would be left to churn out tales of suspense without a host at the helm.

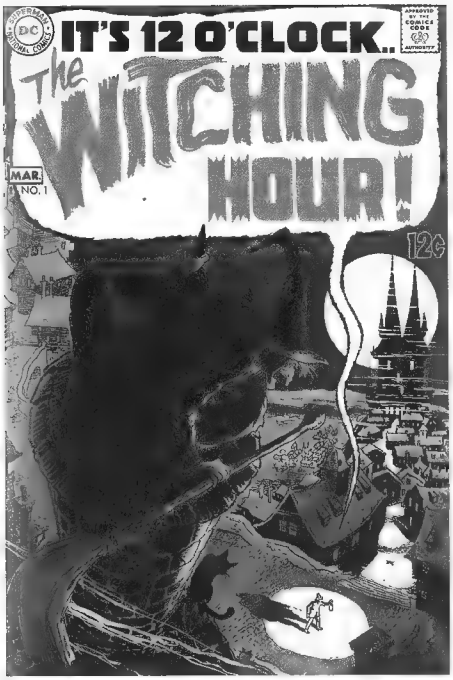
A more successful trio of hostesses held court in what would be DC's first new major entry into the horror genre during this time period, *The Witching Hour*, which started in March of 1969 under Boltinoff's editorship. This book featured three witches, Cynthia (the witch who was a blond bombshell), Mildred (the witch who was plump) and Mordred (the witch who was—well, an old hag). This magical threesome often told their stories with a dark wit, and in the case of the beautiful Cynthia, quite a bit of sex appeal. The banter between the characters made them memorable

MORE THAN JUST A GUY NAMED JOE

Since DC began doing horror comics that fit the EC mode of storytelling, it made sense to bring in someone who had been on hand when EC Comics had brought murder, mayhem and terror to kiddies all across the land. Given Infantino's experience as an artist, it made sense for him to choose a fellow artist to help head up DC's new direction in terror. He couldn't have picked a better man than Joe Orlando. By the time he took over the reigns of DC's two primary terror properties, Orlando was already a legend in the field, and an artist who was well respected by his peers (as he soon would be by the up and coming writers and artists who would work under him on his horror comics).

Over at the *House of Mystery*, Orlando set about remodeling that title by evicting the Martian Manhunter and Dial H for Hero features from the pages of that comic starting with #174 (Jun 1968). Shortly thereafter, DC revived





enough, but what made this trio truly bewitching were some of the beautifully-drawn opening sequences rendered by Alex Toth.

A second all-new title that was added to DC's horror line-up under Murray Boltinoff was *Ghosts*, which launched with its first issue cover-dated October 1971. This title stood out mainly because it never featured any host of its own. What *Ghosts* did offer, though, were "True Tales of the Weird and the Supernatural," and they usually delivered quite nicely.

The position of caretaker and host of the *House of Secrets* was filled by Abel (as in the Bible's Cain and Abel), a fellow that was almost too pleasant to really be a horror host, which is what made him the perfect foil to his brother, and host of the *House of Mystery*, Cain.

Cain was perhaps the most famous and popular of the DC horror hosts. No one else in comics had as sharp a tongue or wit as the man who held the patent on murder. Cain made his first appearance in *House of Mystery* #175 (Aug 1968) and he managed to last longer than any of the other hosts. Cain was the lord and master of the *House of Mystery*, but he often appeared with his brother, Abel, as well as Destiny and Eve, especially when it came to contests where each host would try to one-up the others in weaving the scariest tale.

STORIES TO CHILL YOUR SOULS...

Now, of course, what would any host be without stories to tell their eager readers? The various horror comics of DC had a number of talented writers working for them at one time or another. There were several writers whose work really stood out in these comics and they included Len Wein, Jack Oleck, George Kashdan, Carl Wessler, Leo Dorffman, Steve Skeates, Dave Wood and Al Case. In the beginning, the stories that DC presented couldn't be anywhere near as gory and as shocking as EC had been in its heyday, but the writers on these books proved that good shock value can be had by being restrained (as they had to be under the Comics Code Authority), just as much as if you were getting the full picture of blood and guts that EC was known for. In a lot of ways, the stories that were done early on were similar in tone to the anthology television shows of that time period that must have surely influenced them, such as *The Twilight Zone*, *Night Gallery* and *One Step Beyond*.

...ART TO DIE FOR

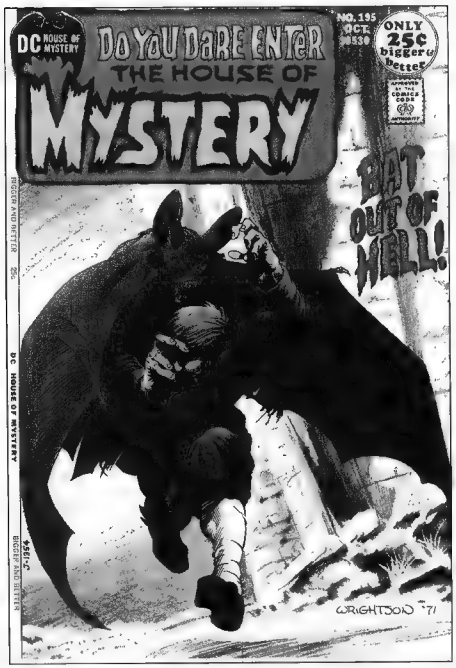
If DC couldn't deliver all-out shocking images like EC had, they could at least deliver one thing EC did: great artwork. The DC line of horror comics featured a regular group of artists who contributed to the books, all of them talented in their own way and all of them perfectly suited for DC's stories of fright, more so than they would have been on the super-hero books. The list included such talents as Jerry Grandenetti, whose layouts and character designs were always fascinating to see; Lee Elias, the former Eclipso artist who always had an old school charm to his work; and Rubney, who featured some of the most detailed work of any of the horror comics. Other regulars included Jack Sparling, George Tuska and Sid Greene. At one time or another, readers could also pick up any of the books and perhaps find a story by the likes of Wally Wood, Al Williamson, Gil Kane, Curt Swan, Murphy Anderson, Neal Adams, Gray Morrow, Jeff Jones, Jim Aparo or Dick Dillin. All of these men were legends in the field, but among these legends were some young stars in the making who cut their teeth on these comics too.

The first break-out star of this line of comics was Bernie Wrightson, who was his generation's answer to Ghastly Graham Ingels. Wrightson provided many classic covers and stories for these titles. Of course very few stories match his most memorable contribution, a story called simply "Swamp Thing," which Wrightson did with Len Wein for *House of Secrets* #92. This story and its main

character proved to be so popular that the Swamp Thing was eventually spun off into his own series and into comic book history.

A second artist who caught the attention of readers because of these comic books was Michael Wm. Kaluta, who did art for *House of Mystery*, *House of Secrets* and *Ghosts* before making a major impact on fandom as the original artist on DC's early 1970s version of *The Shadow*. Kaluta would also return to the horror fold to do covers for a later entry to DC's horror line-up, the short-lived *Doorway to Nightmare*.

A surprise hit in the horror books was the work of an artist who made the readers chuckle, rather than shudder. That artist was *Mad Magazine*'s own Sergio Aragones. Aragones did a series of one-pagers that showed the more humorous side of horror, and especially the lighter sides of Cain (in *House of Mystery* these one-pagers were called "Cain's Game Room" and "Cain's Gargoyles") and of Abel (in *House of Secrets* where these one-pagers were called "Abel's Fables").



TALENT FROM THE PHILIPPINES

One of the greatest services that DC's horror comics did was introduce American comic book fans to some of the most talented artists that the Philippines had to offer. Their ranks included Alex Nino, Tony de Zuñiga, Gerry Talaoc, Ernie Chua and E.R. Cruz. The real stand-outs in this pool of talent though, and who still remain two of the most underrated talents outside of the industry were Nestor Redondo and Alfredo Alcala. Redondo's art style was very similar to that of Bernie Wrightston, which explains why Redondo was chosen to replace Wrightston when he left the *Swamp Thing* comic book. Alfredo Alcala's work on the horror comics are, in a word, beautiful. Alcala's work was always richly detailed and he was highly regarded as one of the best inkers in the business whose work shined through brilliantly, whether he was inking his own work or that of another penciler.

The work that was produced by the Filipino artists for DC's horror comics always had a great deal of character, although it took me a long time to really appreciate what true artists men like Alcala and his peers were. Their style didn't grab me as a kid, mainly because it looked so different from the house styles of Marvel or DC. That was the main reason their talents went untapped by both DC and Marvel. Now I can see that these men transcended house styles and made comics with a lot of heart and soul, and I am ashamed to admit it that as a younger reader I was turned off by their styles. The real horror story of this is that it was probably like that for many other readers too, and because of that, a lot of tremendous talent was never fully given the chance to shine.

STAYING THE COURSE, AND PAYING THE PRICE

The big five of DC's horror line-up had a pretty decent run and the horror line lasted roughly fifteen years. During that time, there were new artists and writers who came and went, although a certain core remained to churn out stories for these books. The formula for these stories really didn't change much over the years, but the taste in horror did. As I said before, the first few years of these books were more than likely influenced by television fare like *The Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery*. These comics were also born of a more innocent time period when horror films themselves weren't really capable of pushing the envelope like they do today. When the mystery books first came out, the classic Universal horror films and the British Hammer Horror films were the height of cinematic thrills, and as spooky as they were for their day, many modern fans consider them too tame to be truly horrific. By the close of the 1960s and the dawn of the 1970s, tastes in horror films were changing drastically. The same year that DC launched their line of

mystery books, film audiences were witnessing *Rosemary's Baby* and the original *Night of the Living Dead*, two horror films that reflected the changing flavor of horror and the changing taste of its fans.

At the start of the 1970s, the frights came even more fast and furious (and intensely) with the release of films like *The Exorcist*, the original *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and by the end of the decade horror fans would see the release of slasher films like *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* as the ante for cinematic horror was raised with the displaying of more frequent (and gratuitous) blood, gore and nudity. Throughout the 1970s, DC's horror comics remained the same, never choosing to buck the Code or trying to see what they could get away with like films often did. Eventually the books stopped being scary (unless you were eight like me) and then they just started becoming—well, quaint. And you know, "quaint" and "horror" just don't go together.

On top of that, there was the DC implosion of the late 1970s that laid claim to numerous comic book titles. With changing tastes in horror that DC couldn't compete with and the problems within the company, it was only a matter of time before DC's mystery line became a victim. The first to feel the axe was *The Witching Hour*. The bell tolled for it with #85 (Oct 1978). *House of Secrets* closed its doors with #154 (Nov 1978). *House of Secrets* and Abel faired a little better as it soon was combined with the recently defunct *Doorway to Nightmare* in a 68-page, dollar-comic version of *Unexpected*. Alas, *Unexpected* and *Ghosts* were both cancelled in the same month, May 1982 (*Unexpected* with #222 and *Ghosts* with #112).

SOME NEW BLOOD BEFORE THE FINAL CURTAIN

As stated earlier, the first order of business in preparing *House of Mystery* for its new life as a straight mystery comic was jettisoning regular features like The Martian Manhunter and Dial H for Hero. Ironically, it would be the introduction of one last new feature in the pages of the book that would provide some new blood before the doors to the house closed for good. The feature was "I...Vampire!", created by J.M. DeMatteis, which first appeared in #289 (Feb 1981) and told the story of Andrew Bennett, a vampire locked in mortal combat with his former (human) lover, Mary, Queen of Blood. The series has a cult following today, due in part to the stories by writer Bruce Jones (who also gave horror fans the legendary *Twisted Tales* from Pacific Comics at the start of the 1980s) and who was then followed by the writing team of Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn with artwork by Tom Sutton, Adrian Gonzales and Dan Day. When the series ended in #319 (Aug 1983), it was just two issues before *House of Mystery* itself came to an end. With the release of *House of Mystery* #321 (Oct 1983), an era in comics came to an end. The Bronze Age of DC's horror comics was over.

THE EVOLUTION OF HORROR

Long before *House of Mystery* closed up, Joe Orlando had stepped down as the editor of the book and *House of Secrets* to eventually become DC's Vice-President and Editorial Director. When *House of Mystery* #321 hit the stands, Karen Berger was at the helm of the book. Berger soon would move on to editing the only remaining remnant of DC's glory days of horror, *The Saga of the Swamp Thing*, a title which was redefining horror on a monthly basis in the early 1980s under the guiding hands of writer Alan Moore and artists like Steve Bissette, Rick Veitch, John Totleben and the aforementioned Alfredo Alacala.

It was the work of Moore and company, and their talent combined with their ability and willingness to take DC out of the box that the previous era of horror comics had trapped them in that led to the next step in the genre for DC: the Vertigo line of comics. The Comics Code made sure that mainstream comics wouldn't go too far in the late sixties, all the way up to the early 1980s, but Vertigo, with its direct sales market outlets, would push the boundaries of the genre like never before. Now, as many readers of the Vertigo line can attest, DC has caught up with the rest of world of horror and is now producing comics that are on a par with the cinematic competition. The results have been a popular line-up that has managed to gain a loyal fan following of readers, many of whom weren't even around when the first wave of change transformed DC's line-up of horror comics way, way back in the day (as the kids say).

FINAL THOUGHTS

As I said before, I like to think that I have grown into quite the horror fan since that fateful day I first discovered what horror comics were. I also like to think I can take whatever the genre tosses at me and hold my own when it comes to controlling my fears. Looking back on my first encounter with DC's line of horror, I can't help but chuckle at how afraid I was over nothing. But that is the magic of being eight and able to have an old issue of *Unexpected* scare the living daylights out of you. No matter what thrills and scares I experience via the genre today, few compare to the sensation I felt all those years ago.

When you are eight years old, it is amazing what can get inside your head and stick with you for a long, long time. Those DC horror comics sure did that to me, so much so that I felt compelled to sit down for *Comic Book Marketplace* and take this time to shed some light on this often neglected chapter of comic book history. Mind you, I don't claim to be an expert on the subject of these books. Just think of me as an adult who remembered being scared silly as a kid, and who now hopes to do the same for some other lucky boy or girl who might perhaps be reading this.

I want to thank the guys at Acme Comics of Greensboro, NC who were very helpful in lining up the comics I needed to make this article a reality. Thanks again, guys!

MORBID MEMO FROM EC COMICS

Heh, Heh! Long time no see. We three GhouLunatics have been keeping our five good eyes peeled (and next time, we'll sharpen that knife, believe me!) for sight of your hide! But you hid your hide too good—let me bring you up to date.

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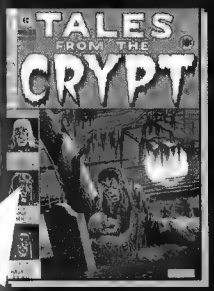

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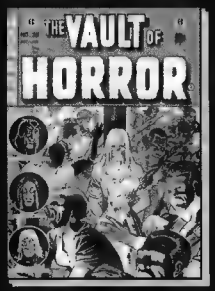

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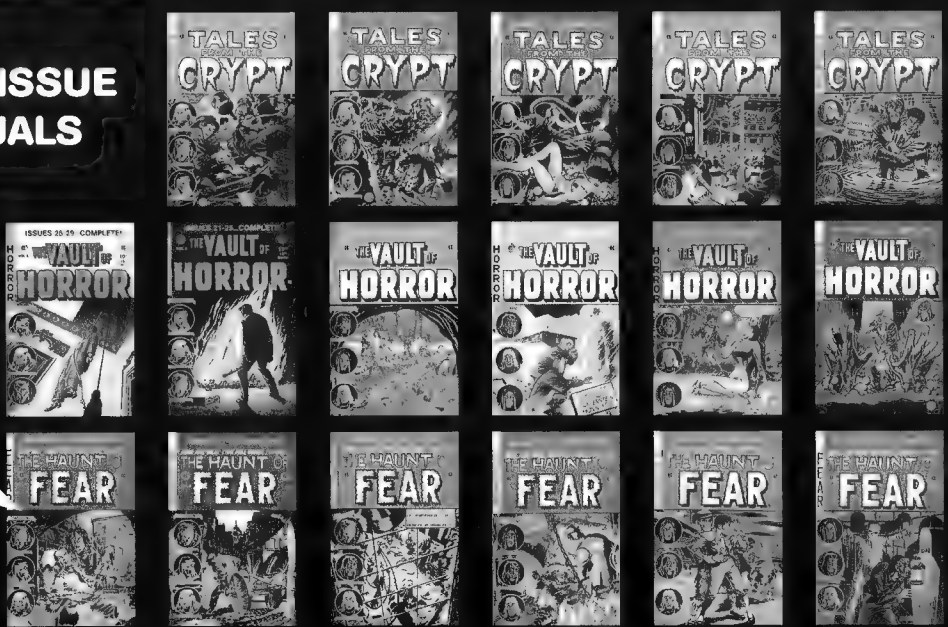


The powerful splash page to *The Black Forest*.

Continued from page 43

thanks to the mercury in the vaccines that the powers-that-be are lying to us about—but I digress. We are very deeply involved in attempting to recover him. Lots of therapy and biological interventions—and we are having success. But I really have to be there for him. And not that Hollywood has been banging on the door—but I have made zero effort to direct anything these past few years. I've really been concentrating on being here for Jack and writing, and that, I'm pleased to say, is going extremely well.

I'm currently completing a writing assignment for the producers of *Cold Mountain* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. It's called *The Bobby Gold Stories* and is based on the novel of the same name by Anthony Bourdain, who wrote *Kitchen Confidential*. Really cool New York crime story.

My screenplay *Sacrifice* was picked up by Raw/Progressive and they are putting it together with director Michael Bassett, who did *Death Watch*.

And I'm working with Dark Horse's movie division on a project called *The Voice*. Mike Richardson has been working really closely with me and has been tremendously helpful in developing the script. He gives these laser sharp notes.

I am thinking of directing something in the near future. My writing partner, Todd Livingston, and I wrote something called *The Living and the Dead* that I'd really like to do. It has a real Hammer sensibility.

CBM: What triggered your desire to write comics?

Tinnell: Neil Vokes! It hadn't occurred to me beforehand, though my good friend Andy Sands had pushed me to do it for some time. But I couldn't imagine anyone would want me! Now it dominates my life—I've never been so happy in a creative sense.

CBM: How did *The Black Forest* come about?

Tinnell: Todd and I had written it as a spec script. And then, bam, there comes *Van Helsing*. And we knew we were dead. And Neil wanted to do *The Wicked West* (which we are doing now) but then he read *The Black Forest* and said, "Whoa, stop everything." The rest is history.

CBM: Give us a description of the plot.

Tinnell: A young American ace and Britain's greatest stage magician must travel behind enemy lines into the Black Forest in an effort to thwart some occult shenanigans the Germans are cooking up.

CBM: *The Black Forest*'s story is a wonderful blend of history (World War I) and iconic literature (*Dracula* and *Frankenstein*). It's a theme that's been explored in novels (*The Public Burning, The Alienist* and *Carter Beats The Devil*). Your comic and Darwyn Cooke's *New Frontier* are now exploring this sub-genre. Is this something that interests you?

Tinnell: Well, first let me say that Darwyn Cooke rocks! Okay, back to the question. I do like the idea of merging with history. Sometimes I like it when there's a lot of authenticity to it—like Graves' *I, Claudius* , which is simply wonderful and pretty damned good history. Then there are instances like

The dead walk the earth in *The Black Forest*.

Frankenstein's Monster, the secret weapon of World War I, from *The Black Forest.*

Gore Vidal's "histories" featuring Aaron Burr and his fictional descendants, which I like very much but play fairly loose with history—though Vidal may disagree! And in comics there's stuff I loved as a kid like *The Haunted Tank* (a book I'd love a shot at), which I think is really powerful. I guess they help us feel connected with our pasts—help us in our efforts to process our place in history. I am certainly drawn to re-interpreting history that's for sure.

CBM: You share the writing chores with Todd Livingston. How does your partnership work?

Tinnell: When he's sober it's great. No, seriously. Todd is a great person to collaborate with on things like THE BLACK FOREST because our influences are so similar. We have a mental shorthand. Ditto with Neil Vokes. You don't find yourself spending too much time explaining things.

But we don't do everything together. I wanted him to work on something I'm now preparing as an online strip called FEAST OF THE SEVEN FISHES. Kind of a funny, sad, slightly autobiographical story of an italian family celebrating Christmas Eve, and how it sucks not to have a girlfriend for the holidays. And Todd just didn't gravitate towards it. And I respect that. And he's developing a book called THE SISTERHOOD that is a hoot, and there was just no need for me on that. It all works out.

I anticipate we'll always be collaborating on a significant percentage of stuff. It's just too good when we write together and are in sync.

Of course, the beauty of the collaborative nature of comics goes beyond my kinship with Todd. I mean, Neil and Ade are equally symbiotic with me. And then there's our life-saving art director on all these projects, Anthony Schiavino. Anthony is our great discovery. The guy is supremely talented in a visual design sense. But just as important, he has this tremendous work ethic. He makes it a habit to save my life like ten times a week. All in all, great people surround us.

And as a group we have an extended family of sorts that really supports—and I don't just mean our real families! I mean guys like Mike Oeming and Mark Wheatley and Jerry Carr and Mark Clark, real "go-to" guys who understand how critical it is we support and advise one another.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't give a shout-out to my guys at Image. Eric Stephenson is a prince. Ditto Clay Moore, who I think is going to prove a huge asset to the company. Brett Evans, Alan Hue and Jon Malin all give us 110% on these books. That's a big key I think. Having and nurturing these sorts of relationships with this caliber of people...

CBM: What other companies did you approach with *The Black Forest*, aside from Image?

Tinnell: There was no need to look beyond Image. The deal was perfect for us.

CBM: Would you like to work with DC or Marvel?

Tinnell: Well, sure, if I thought I was bringing something special to the mix. I'd love to dive into some of DC's war titles and bring in our spooky sensibilities. And if I said I wouldn't like to try my hand at a Batman story I'd be lying. As far as Marvel goes, and I realize this is blasphemous, but I would kill to work on *Tomb of Dracula*, or any incarnation of the Wolfman/Colan character. *The Defenders* would be fun, and *The Avengers*. Please note I am not holding my breath!

DAS IST GUT, DUMMKOPF HERKOMMEN ICH PAPA!
AUF WIEDER SHUH, FRAULEIN! THIS ONE'S FOR THE BOYS IN THE TRENCHES!
TAT TAT
RATATATATATAT
WHOA! AMBUSH! I CAN'T BELIEVE I FELL FOR THAT!
OKAY YOU WANNA DANCE? WE'LL DANCE--
ZAPPP

Some World War I dog fight action from *The Black Forest.*

The climactic monster fight from *The Black Forest*.

CBM: *The Black Forest* is a throwback to classic horror. About ten years ago, Dark Horse attempted this by adapting the classic *Universal Monsters* to a series of comics, but the project sputtered and eventually faded away. Do you remember these?

Tinnell: I do. I think I had *Frankenstein* maybe? It's a shame. I think there's so much possibility for these characters. And a chance to draw in some non-traditional comics readers—folks who collect and follow horror but have long since left comics.

CBM: How have the sales been for *The Black Forest*?

Tinnell: Better than anticipated, all things considered. I mean we sold out in 44 days and are going into our second printing, which is pretty good for a book whose writers were absolute nobodies in the comics community.

CBM: You've been approached to license *The Black Forest*'s characters; can you give the details?

Tinnell: Well, we had made a deal with my friend Jerry Gergeley, who runs Tom Savini's make-up FX school, to do some small busts. And he's doing one of the Nosferatu characters. But then Michael Hudson of ReelArt Studios came along with a really great offer to do much larger, more expensive busts. And he brought along the brilliant Shaun Nagle to sculpt them. I've seen the preliminaries and they are amazing. So we are super excited about both projects. Jerry's will be ready by late summer and the first one from ReelArt will be out in October.

CBM: Any plans for a sequel to *The Black Forest*?

Tinnell: Oh yeah. Image has been after us almost from the beginning to keep going. Todd and I both had other writing commitments and Neil, of course, hasn't stopped drawing. But I think it's safe to say we'll be ready with a new book by summer of 2005. And in the new issue of *Frankenstein Mobster* (#4) there's a special "Tales of the Black Forest" backup story that'll give the fans something to enjoy. Neil's artwork is wonderful in this one... but then I think it's wonderful in everything!!

CBM: What other projects are you working on?

Tinnell: Neil is finishing up *The Wicked West*, which is our new graphic novel from Image—it comes out in October. He's really blowing my mind with this one. Imagine the outlaw Josey Wales rode into *Salem's Lot*—that sort of gets you started on what the book is, but there's a lot more to it than that. And again, there's a hook that fans of classic horror are going to love. It's not as pulpy as *The Black Forest* but I think it will appeal to a broad audience. And the book it going to be packed with extras—including a pinup by Nick Cardy, which I still can't believe.

I'm also working with British artist Adrian Salmon on something called *The Terry Sharp Stories*. Terry Sharp is a director of horror movies in England in the early sixties. He's also a tireless combatant of a ring of Satanists hell-bent on taking over the British government. It's like *The Saint* meets *Curse of the Demon*. Adrian is doing gorgeous work and writing this is pure bliss. The character will debut very briefly in the new CBLDF benefit book *Even More Fund Comics* in September. Then he'll appear in a special online strip starting in October for five weeks on www.sunnyfundays.com. And he'll appear in a stand-alone five page backup story in *Frankenstein Mobster* #6 in the fall as well. All of this should serve to prepare readers for his graphic novel debut, *The Faceless: A Terry Sharp Story*, which will be out in early summer, we hope.

Beyond that I'm doing another online strip, the *Feast of the Seven Fishes*, with a wonderful young artist named Ed Piskor. Ed is also doing some work for Harvey Pekar so that should give you some indication of how good he is. The strip will debut on Sunnyfundays in August and will run through early February.

Beyond that there's a project I'm doing with Mark Wheatley among others that I'm really looking forward to. Kerry Gammill and I may be doing something. Most of them are horror. All of them are fun.

CBM: What is your opinion of the current crop of horror oriented comics (DC's Vertigo line, *Hellboy*, etc.)?

Tinnell: I think some of it is great and some of it is... not. I followed *Hellblazer* for years and loved it. But I'm so busy these days that I don't get to read as much as I'd like. I really, really can't get enough of *The Goon*—it's a treasure. I enjoy *Hellboy* of course. It's ridiculous I haven't hooked up with Scott Allie of Dark Horse, yet. I think he's a smart guy who "gets" horror and I expect big things from him. I'm anxious to see where Jason Henderson takes *Sword of Dracula* and how Mark Wheatley wraps up the initial storyline on *Frankenstein Mobster*. I enjoyed *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, of course. Neil is going to be doing something with Miles Gunter that I've read that is going to be fantastic!

But *The Goon*, man, *The Goon*!

CBM: Looking back, what horror comics and creators of the fifties do you look upon as important and influential?

Tinnell: The EC's obviously. I think it begins and ends there, horror speaking. For me anyway. I'm sure there is other stuff but I had no access to it—unless it was reprinted in a *House of Secrets* or the like when I was a kid...

CBM: How about the sixties?

Tinnell: Well, Frazetta's covers were sure influential. I just wish I'd been older. Hell, I thought some of the Gold Key stuff was good so what do I know?

CBM: The seventies?

Tinnell: Now you're talking! Adams, Colan, Wrightson, Wolfman. And for me personally as a writer, Goodwin and O'Neill were huge—in any genre.

CBM: The eighties?

Tinnell: Moore, Gaiman. Beyond that I loved titles like *Preacher* and *Hellblazer* and the like.

CBM: After a bad fall, comics seem to be making a comeback. How do you see the current market?

Tinnell: I think there's some really interesting stuff out there and I think the Internet offers creators the chance to make a dent with their own stuff. I am very impressed with stuff like *Powers* and *Astro City* and *Arrowsmith* — some of Busiek's best, most subtle writing, in my humble opinion. And I swear Eric Powell is not paying me to say this but *The Goon* is just that good.

I think we're in the midst of a resurgence of sorts. At least I hope so. There's always a market for quality. I believe that to my core. And while nothing is a given, if you write and draw good books, they will have success. Maybe not the monetary success one would like but if you want monetary success I would suggest moving beyond the arts into more lucrative territories.

CBM: Will the genre ever go back to anthology stories as in the days of EC, *Creepy* and *Eerie*?

Tinnell: You'd think, wouldn't you? However, I am constantly assured that "anthologies" don't work—in book or film. Which is odd to me. I mean, in film, Amicus over in England put out many EC adaptations as features—and believe me, if the first one wasn't successful there never would have been a second. I think the deck is somewhat stacked against the comic books in general and within that there are a thousand different prejudices at work against any given genre.

I think if you could provide a horror anthology that regularly published great talent and you took the time to promote it—and I mean creators as well as companies—then I don't see why it can't succeed. But on the other hand, the comic book has a hell of a lot of competition out there. I'm having it both ways, aren't I?

CBM: What do you see for the future of the horror genre in comics?

Tinnell: I think there always will be a place for horror in comics. Considering how much of the stuff I'm doing in the near future is horror-related they had better work!

Horror presents a challenge in the comic format. In film you have actors and sound and music and camera movement and editing to build suspense. With the written word alone you have the theater of the mind to do the same. In comics one must rely on manipulating image and word as best as they can to attempt to horrify—or at least build tension. And there are a ton of elements working against you—not the least of which is the fact the reader can often literally see the resolution of something before you've finished setting it up. And that's where the craft comes in.

I've contributed two short stories to Chanting Monks' Zacherley comic now precisely because I want to hone these types of storytelling tools. It's not a big prestige publication but it gives me a chance to practice my craft.

I think that's the most important thing. Working all the time. Constantly refining your work. I read an interview with Bendis and he said, and I'm paraphrasing, but he said, people can't believe he can write a comic script a week. And his attitude was "Of course, I can. Why shouldn't I? I'm a writer." And I thought, right on, man! Hell, yeah.

Once again, I've digressed.

Former Marvel and Superman artist Kerry Gammill's pin-up illustration from *The Black Forest*.

Leo Bachle

King of the Canadian Whites

the CANADIAN COMICS
THE GREATEST OF THEM ALL
THE MAN ON THE Postage STAMP
JOHNNY CANUCK
HOW JOHNNY CANUCK WON THE SECOND WORLD WAR
And other dynamite tales from Canada's only comic books
LES BARKER
1943

conducted by John R. Stuart

This interview was conducted at Les Barker's Toronto home on October 30 and November 6, 1999 and was copy-edited by Les.

During the early days of the Second World War the Canadian government passed the "War Exchange Conservation Act." This act banned the importing of all US fictional periodicals and was intended to fight a growing trade deficit.

Fallout of the act was the banning of all US comic books, a disaster for Canadian children who were fans of this fledgling industry. Soon this void on the newsstands was filled by comic books produced by four new Canadian publishers. The most prominent of the new companies was Bell Features, run by Cy Bell who created WOW, Dime, Active, Commando, Triumph *and* Funny Comics. *These comic books were published with color covers and black and white interiors and have come to be known as Canadian Whites. Of all the characters to appear in the Canadian Whites the most dynamic, audacious, spirited and powerful character was Johnny Canuck. Johnny Canuck was produced by a young Toronto man named Leo Bachle and, as you will see from the following interview, Leo Bachle and Johnny Canuck are one and the same person.*

John R. Stuart: You began your career as Leo Bachle, and created the character Johnny Canuck in 1941, then you changed your name to Les Barker in the late '40s.

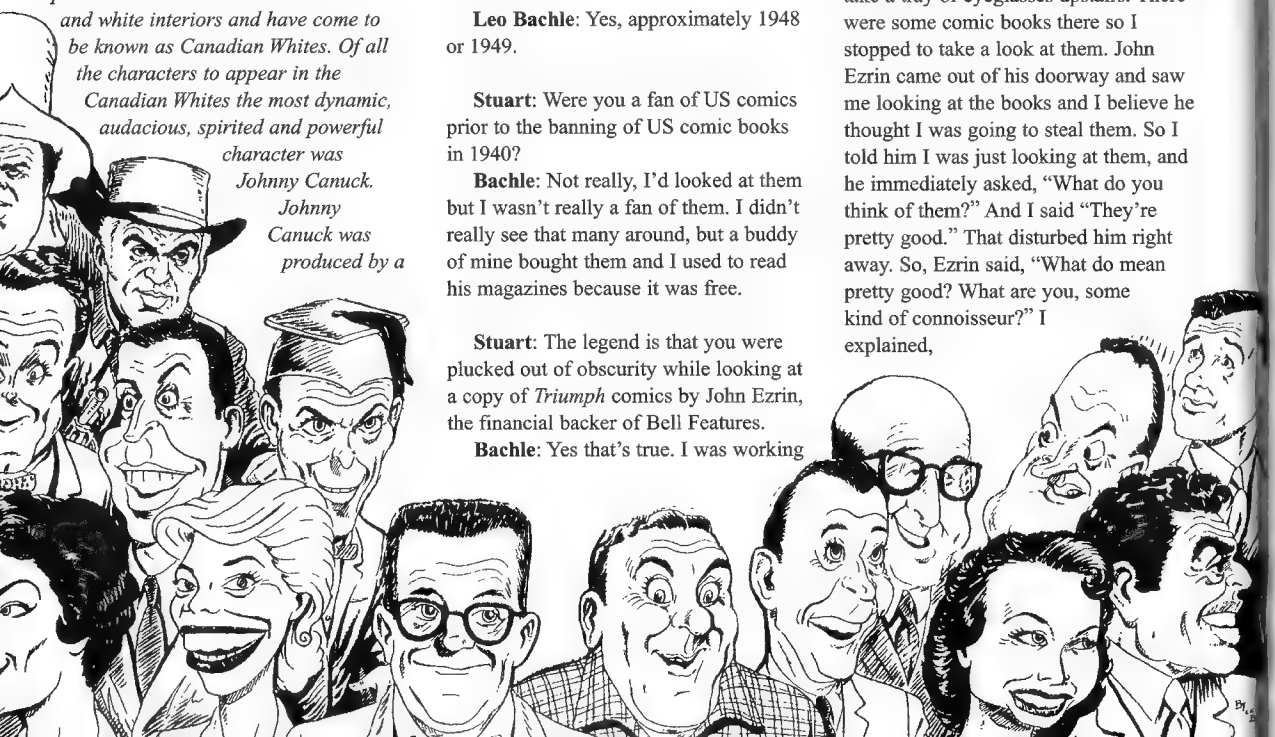
Leo Bachle: Yes, approximately 1948 or 1949.

Stuart: Were you a fan of US comics prior to the banning of US comic books in 1940?

Bachle: Not really, I'd looked at them but I wasn't really a fan of them. I didn't really see that many around, but a buddy of mine bought them and I used to read his magazines because it was free.

Stuart: The legend is that you were plucked out of obscurity while looking at a copy of *Triumph* comics by John Ezrin, the financial backer of Bell Features.

Bachle: Yes that's true. I was working for Imperial Optical and I was asked to take a tray of eyeglasses upstairs. There were some comic books there so I stopped to take a look at them. John Ezrin came out of his doorway and saw me looking at the books and I believe he thought I was going to steal them. So I told him I was just looking at them, and he immediately asked, "What do you think of them?" And I said "They're pretty good." That disturbed him right away. So, Ezrin said, "What do mean pretty good? What are you, some kind of connoisseur?" I explained,



"It's not that, but I know what I like." He asked, "Don't you think that it's good art, a pretty good story?" I said, "The art's not bad, the story is okay." Ezrin asked, "Well, do you think you could do better?"

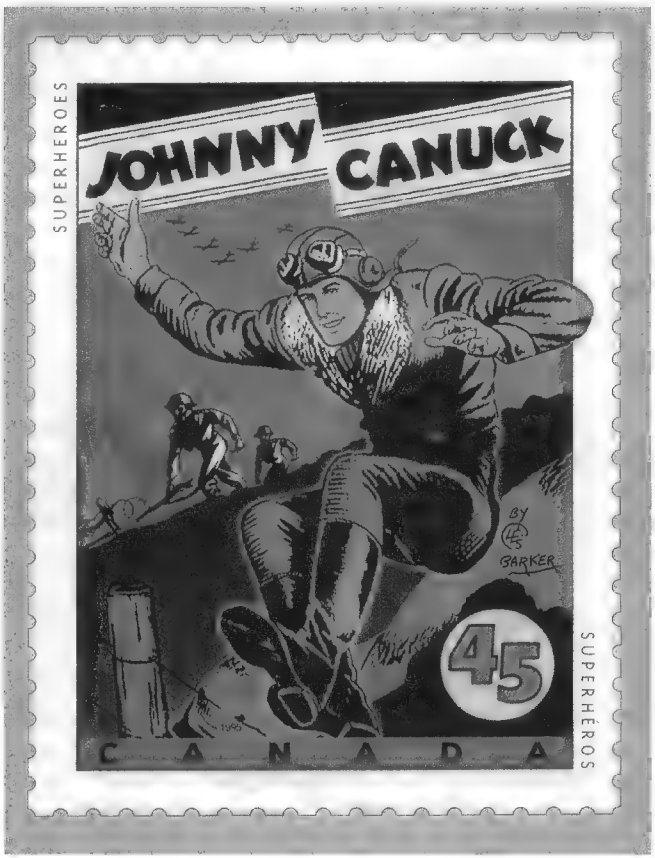
"Yeah, I think I could."

"Well if you can, come into the office and draw something for me." So he dragged me into his office and asked me to draw two guys fighting, which I did. He said "It's good and you're fast. Could you draw for a comic book and draw it that fast?" My reply was "Yeah, as fast as you want it."

"Could you come back tomorrow with an idea for a comic book?" asked Ezrin.

Stuart: So you accepted the challenge and went home and created perhaps the greatest of all Canadian comic book characters, Johnny Canuck.

Bachle: That's right. I said, "I'll come back tomorrow," and the next day I came back with Johnny Canuck.



Stuart: What was the inspiration for Johnny Canuck?

Bachle: The idea for Johnny Canuck came from my Uncle Johnny who actually was a real war hero from the First World War and I also had a cousin, who was also a Johnny, my best friend Johnny McGlade. He's still my best friend to this day. So, the name Johnny had great meaning for me. Canuck came from a show, actually it was an old song about Kentucks and Canucks. And the word Canuck had stuck in my mind, it was the first time I'd heard the word.

Stuart: Did Cy Bell offer you a contract immediately?

Bachle: No, not a contract. He just said, "Sit down and draw." And at that time, they offered me $20 a week to draw comics. I felt I was worth more money because I could draw so fast, so I asked him to give me a price per page. They were desperate for art, so he agreed to $4.50 per page. A short time later it was increased to $5. Cy Bell then decided that we shouldn't even work in his building, we should work on our own outside, and all the artists went freelance. I knew there were some deals with one or two of the older artists. They were being paid more money, but we never did find out what they were getting.

Stuart: Looking at pictures of you from this period it's very clear that you drew Johnny Canuck to look like yourself and that you often drew from photographs.

Bachle: Yes I did and I liked to work from photographs. There was a lot of my personality in the character. He did the things I would like to do.

Stuart: Were you still in school at this time?

Bachle: At this time I had left to join the Canadian Army and I was close to five months before they discharged me for being underage.

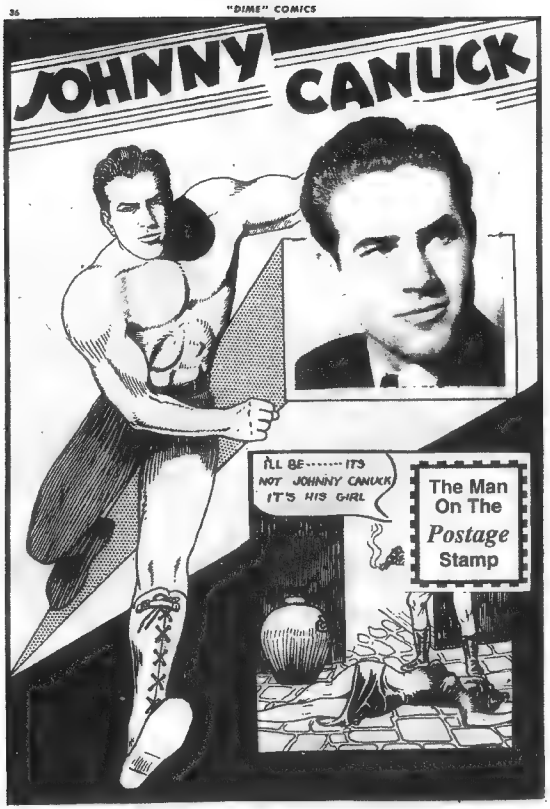
Stuart: You were discharged from the Canadian Army and became a fulltime comic book artist at the tender age of 16. This must have made you quite a celebrity at Danforth Tech, your old high school?

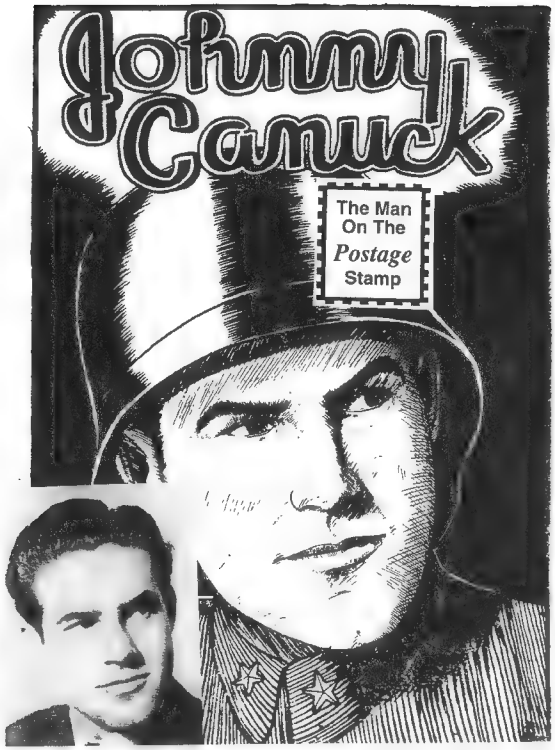
Bachle: Yes. I wasn't even going there anymore, but the students all knew me very well. One of my closest friends was still going to school at Danforth Tech, a fellow named Ross Saakel. Finally, he left Tech to come and work with me. He did comic books as well. He did satires of my characters; I had Wild Bill so he did Mild Will. I had the Brain and he had the Noodle.

Stuart: You often used your friends and previous teachers as subjects for both villains and heroes. Did this ever cause you trouble or were they largely receptive to their depiction?

Bachle: No, they resented it. They couldn't touch me or do anything to me because I was no longer a student. I did hear various threatening messages, nothing ever came of it. The students took great joy in showing the books to me as if I'd never seen the books before.

Stuart: What was working for Cy





Bell like?

Bachle: Cy Bell was a serious person who was a good businessman. At times, he was a little annoying, but I did begrudgingly like him, and he and I got along in a strange relationship in the sense that we rather understood one another. He thought I was quite tricky and I *knew* he was quite tricky. There was a lot of mutual admiration. [Laughter]

Stuart: Did you ever use him as a villain?

Bachle: Yes I used him twice as a villain and once as a semi-hero, he liked the hero better!

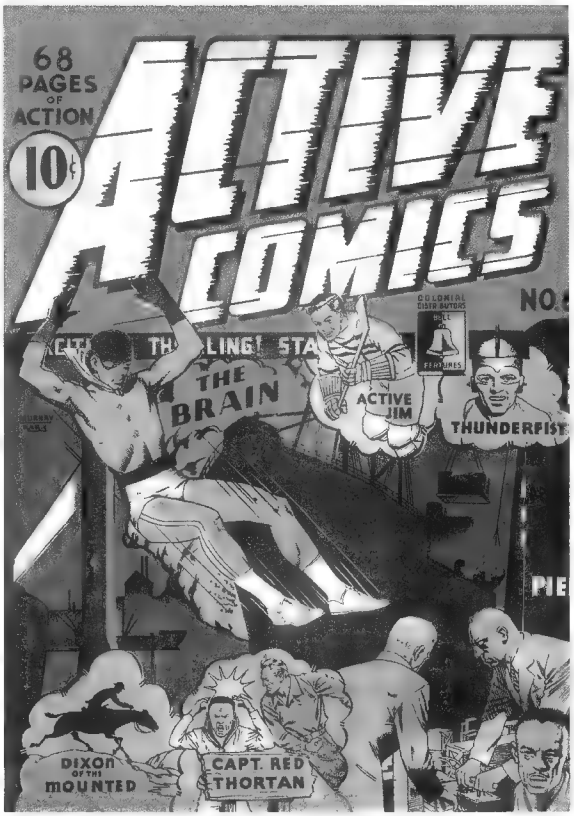
Stuart: You mentioned earlier that you didn't actually draw in the Bell Features offices at 165 York St.

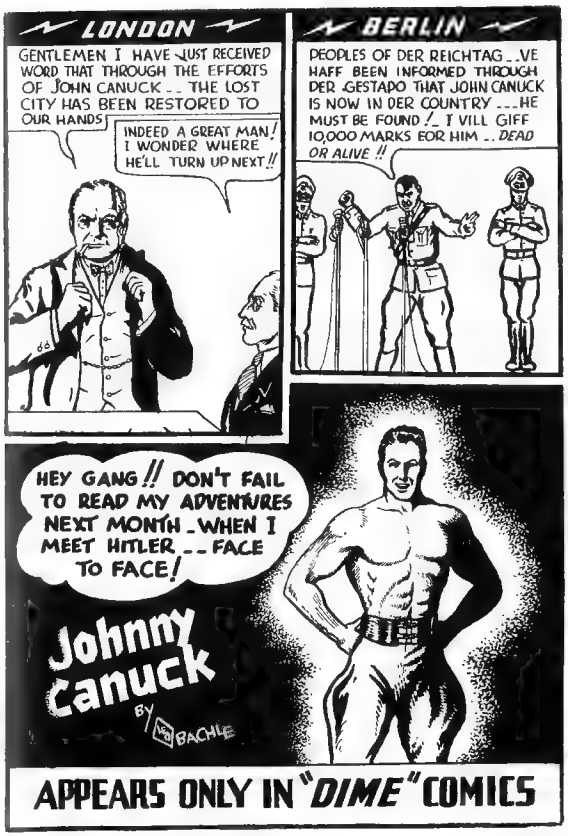
Bachle: That's right, we all had desks in this loft, there were five or six of us. Then we got an office together, Ross Saakel, Ted Steele and myself. We found it was better working together, it was easier to get a start on the drawing, but then we fooled around so much we never started anything.

Stuart: Did Cy Bell provide you with any guidance or plotting details for Johnny Canuck or for any of your other characters?

Bachle: No, Cy never interfered or had anything to say about my work. I always took great pride in writing something or in creating something new. I'd come in, and say "Cy, I've created a new character." Well Cy never really looked at it. He would just say "How many pages have you got?" and he'd just start thumbing through the pages and say "Here's your money." I would say, "Take a look at them." He'd reply, "I know they're good, are you trying to feed your ego again?" I would have liked some appraisal, any response at all. He could be quite nice at times, but then he would be just the opposite. I remember one time Ted Steele brought in some pages, it was Christmas Eve and Cy rejected it. He just counted my pages and gave me my money. So, I asked him "Cy, its

THIS IS HIS EXCELLENCY'S QUARTERS...BARON.
THANK YOU... I'LL NEED YOU NO FURTHER. REPORT TO YOUR OFFICER IN CHARGE.
JOHNNY THEN OPENS THE DOOR QUICKLY AND STEPS INSIDE BEING CAREFUL TO SLIDE THE BOLT AFTER ENTERING.
WHAT'S DER MEANING OF?... WHY...WHY IT'S JOHNNY CANUCK!
OKAY ADOLF OLD BOY, JUST SIT TIGHT.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? DON'T KILL ME! I'LL GIVE YOU MONEY ANYTHING!
BUT AS HITLER TALKS, HIS HAND SLIPS STEALTHILY TOWARDS AN ALARM BUTTON ON HIS DESK.
THIS MOVE IS NOT OVERLOOKED BY JOHNNY AS HE WHIPS OUT HIS BAYONET AND LETS FLY.
I WOULDN'T TRY ANYTHING LIKE THAT IF I WERE YOU ....IT ISN'T HEALTHY!




LONDON
GENTLEMEN I HAVE JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF JOHN CANUCK -- THE LOST CITY HAS BEEN RESTORED TO OUR HANDS
INDEED A GREAT MAN! I WONDER WHERE HE'LL TURN UP NEXT!!
BERLIN
PEOPLES OF DER REICHTAG -- VE HAFF BEEN INFORMED THROUGH DER GESTAPO THAT JOHN CANUCK IS NOW IN DER COUNTRY --- HE MUST BE FOUND !_ I VILL GIFF 10,000 MARKS FOR HIM -- DEAD OR ALIVE !!
HEY GANG !! DON'T FAIL TO READ MY ADVENTURES NEXT MONTH - WHEN I MEET HITLER -- FACE TO FACE!
Johnny Canuck
BY BACHLE
APPEARS ONLY IN "DIME" COMICS

Christmas, pay Ted." Well he did, but the ice in the air was just terrible.

Stuart: You were the leader of perhaps the first strike in the comic book industry in 1942? Can you tell us what transpired?

Bachle: That's right, it was late 1942! Finally, myself and the other artists wanted more money. So all the artists got together and we asked for a minimum of $6 per page, and Cy Bell turned us down. I had a good idea that two of the other artists were already getting this rate so I suggested we all go on strike until we got what we wanted. Cy basically told us to go ahead and strike and this threw the other artists. Most of the other guys just folded immediately; they went right back in and begged for their jobs. Ross, Ted and I said no way; we're going to stay out. Well we stayed out for a little while and finally Cy contacted us and said "You guys might as well forget this strike, I'm the only guy you can work for, so come back and do your jobs." I told Ross and Ted that we didn't have to go back on his terms; he'll give us another call. They wanted to go back. I said don't worry he's going to call us. They wanted to know what made me so sure he'd come back to us. "Well you know he never looks at my work. He just counts the pages and picks them up, and pays me. So for the last couple of months I haven't given him an opening

page or closing page for any of my comics, this would mean at least six or seven comics are incomplete. So, he won't be able to go to press without these pages. Then sure enough the phone rang the day after. Cy says "Ok, smart guy, where's the other pages? I said, "Well you never look at them anyway, so let's talk about that raise." He tells me, "Okay, Les, you got it but not those other guys." I said, "No, we all get it or you don't get the pages." Cy answers, "I'll give it to those bastards, too." And we got our raise.

Stuart: Of all the characters that appeared in the Canadian Whites, there is no doubt that Johnny Canuck was the most popular. Were you responsible for all elements of story—doing the plotting, penciling, writing and inking?

Bachle: I did the whole thing, from start to finish. That was something I liked, doing the entire package.

Stuart: As Johnny Canuck grew in popularity, did you ever have the opportunity to do any cover art?

Bachle: Not really, I did only one cover. Covers were always assigned to the older artists. They had some special deal with Cy that they got to do all the covers. That was Adrian Dingle and Edmond Good, they were both good artists. Good finally left for the States and did *Scorchy Smith*.

Stuart: Canada Post issued a stamp in 1995 featuring Johnny Canuck. This is quite an honor for both yourself and Johnny. The drawing used for the stamp was taken directly from an issue of *Dime Comics*. How involved were you in the production of the stamp?

Bachle: Well, I did the original drawing and the rest was done by the Post Office. They took a small part of the drawing and took pieces from another issue for the soldiers in the background. They told me they didn't want any violence in it, but they added violence themselves, exploding bombs etc., and Johnny had a gun in a holster which they removed, but they then added two soldiers with guns in their hands in the background.

Stuart: You also created some other great characters, such as the Invisible Commando, Wild Bill, the Brain and Chip Pipher. Did you have a personal favorite?

Bachle: Johnny Canuck was my favorite naturally because he was based on me. My next favorite was the Brain.

Stuart: Some of your work featured unusual panel designs, not the norm for comics of this period. How did you come up with these trend setting designs?

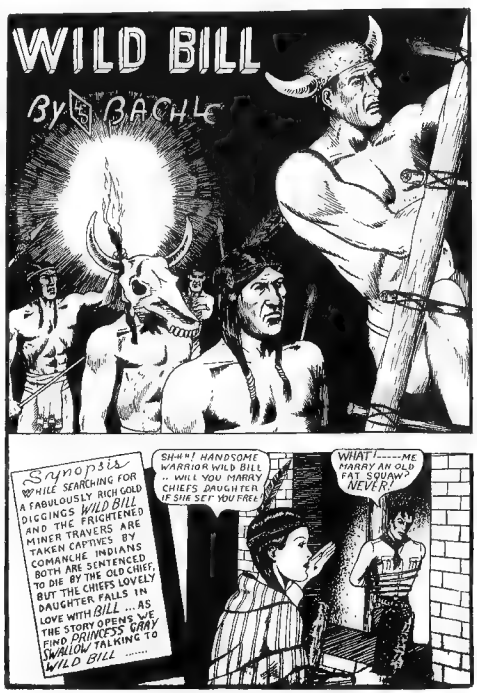
Bachle: I thought it was static just using continuous squares. This didn't give enough action so as I was drawing the picture, if the action went through the panel, then that was just fine. To cut it off seemed absurd; it gave flow to the art.

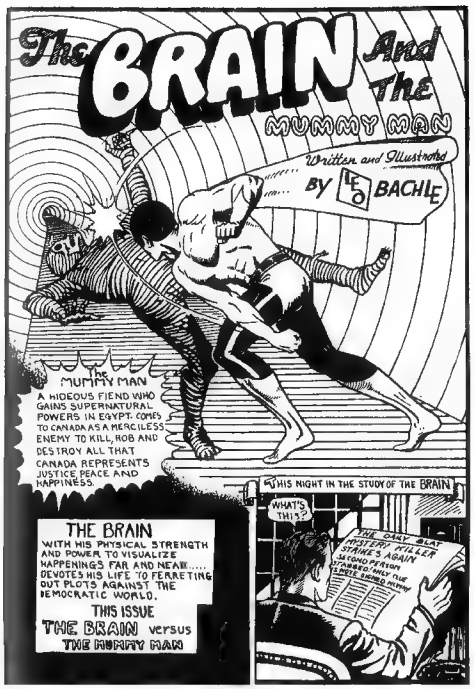
Stuart: I've always been impressed with the beautiful women that you drew, was this a specialty of yours?

Bachle: Oh, Yes. I've always liked beautiful women.

Stuart: Prior to your work at Bell Features did you do any other work as a professional artist?

Bachle: The very first work I ever did was for a man called Bob Jones. He was the advertising manager for General Foods and he more or less just threw me bones as a kid. He encouraged me to draw, he felt I had talent and he bought pictures by me for General Foods for ads.


WILD BILL
By BACHLE
Synopsis
WHILE SEARCHING FOR A FABULOUSLY RICH GOLD DIGGINGS WILD BILL AND THE FRIGHTENED MINER TRAVERS ARE TAKEN CAPTIVES BY COMANCHE INDIANS BOTH ARE SENTENCED TO DIE BY THE OLD CHIEF, BUT THE CHIEFS LOVELY DAUGHTER FALLS IN LOVE WITH BILL ... AS THE STORY OPENS WE FIND PRINCESS GRAY SWALLOW TALKING TO WILD BILL .....
SHWN! HANDSOME WARRIOR WILD BILL .. WILL YOU MARRY CHIEFS DAUGHTER IF SHE SET YOU FREE
WHAT!-----ME MARRY AN OLD FAT SQUAW? NEVER!


The BRAIN And The MUMMY MAN
Written and Illustrated BY LEO BACHLE
THE MUMMY MAN
A HIDEOUS FIEND WHO GAINS SUPERNATURAL POWERS IN EXYPT. COMES TO CANADA AS A MERCILESS ENEMY TO KILL, ROB AND DESTROY ALL THAT CANADA REPRESENTS JUSTICE PEACE AND HAPPINESS.
THIS NIGHT IN THE STUDY OF THE BRAIN
WHAT'S THIS?
THE BRAIN
WITH HIS MYSTICAL STRENGTH AND POWER TO VISUALIZE HAPPENINGS FAR AND NEAR..... DEVOTES HIS LIFE TO FERRETING OUT PLOTS AGAINST THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD.
THIS ISSUE
THE BRAIN versus THE MUMMY MAN

Stuart: Why did you leave Bell Features in late 1943—was it over creative rights or page rates?

Bachle: No, actually I left because I had a better offer. At that time I was already aware that once the war ended, Bell was going to stop publishing. There would be no more Canadian comics. I had a letter from a company in the United States that said they were interested in me and could I call them. I did and they immediately asked what page rate I was getting, so I lied and instead of saying $6, I said $7, and they said they would double that rate and give me $14.

Stuart: Who was your first employer in the U.S.?

Bachle: You know I actually don't remember. I know they were on 47th street, two doors from an Episcopal church. But I started to work for them and then discovered someone else was paying more, so I left. This was for L.B. Cole. I was freelancing for whomever was paying the most.

Stuart: You only worked for L.B Cole for a very short period and then Stan Lee offered you work at Timely?

Bachle: Yes, that's right.

Stuart: What was it like working for a legend like Stan Lee?

Bachle: He could be a bit bizarre. I'll always remember the first time I came into his office, he was playing a flute and there was a large paper banner across the window that said, "Stan Lee is God." I never did find out who put it there or why. He was a real nice young guy; he was like the actor Van Johnson in appearance and manner.

Stuart: It must have been around 1946 or 1947 that you left Timely and moved over to EC, working for Bill Gaines, is this correct?

Bachle: That is correct.

Stuart: Did you work on EC's horror line of comics?

Bachle: I'm sure I did some. I recall drawing some weird characters and I did quite a few of their covers.

Stuart: During my research for this interview I used the Grand Comics Book Database and I came across an EC artist named Lee Bachelor who worked on *International Comics* and *International Crime Patrol*, was this your work?

Bachle: That was me! I worked under the name Lee Bachelor for a short period.

Stuart: What were the differences between working for a small Canadian publisher and the much larger US firms?

Bachle: They wanted more control over the product. They didn't believe I could write, pencil and ink the books. Cy Bell gave me complete control. In the US, I was only doing the drawing—that took the fun out of it. It was becoming a bad job working in the US. I was much happier in Canada.

Stuart: During the '40s did you work with any of the great US artists, such as Simon, Schuster, Kirby, Kain, Cole or Schomberg?

Bachle: Only L.B. Cole, he was an editor at the time.

Stuart: Why did you leave the comic book business and move into nightclub entertainment?

Bachle: It would have been late '47, maybe early '48 and a Canadian artist named Ed Alton came down to see me. I tried to get him work at EC but Bill Gaines wouldn't hire him. Well, I liked his work so I hired him to do my backgrounds. Ed was a tall, very handsome fellow, looked like the actor Fred McMurray. Somehow, Gaines got

THIS MURDEROUS FIEND MUST BE STOPPED I'LL CONTACT HIM BY MEANS OF MY PSYCHIC MIND.....THEN DESTROY HIM BEFORE HE KILLS MORE PEOPLE
THE BRAIN THEN GOES INTO A TRANCE AND A VISION OF THE MURDERER BECOMES CLEAR
WELCOME MR BRAIN..... SURPRISED THAT I KNOW YOU'VE CONTACTED ME, EH! WELL LET THIS BE PROOF TO YOU THAT MY POWERS ARE GREATER THAN YOURS.
POP
THE VISION..... IT'S---IT'S DISAPPEARED .....HIS POWERS OVER THOUGHT MUST BE EVEN GREATER THAN MINE....

I'VE TRAPPED YOU AT LAST MUMMY MAN.....NOW RELEASE THE GIRL AND TAKE WHAT'S COMING TO YOU.
YOUR WRONG AGAIN MR. BRAIN.....IT IS YOU THAT IS TRAPPED.
TURN YOUR BACK TO ME..... DO AS YOUR TOLD OR I'LL DRIVE MY MY KNIFE INTO HER THROAT!
THERE IS NOTHING ELSE I CAN DO BUT OBEY HIM!
TAKE THAT YOU DOG!

the impression that either Ed was interested in Gaines' wife or vice versa. Now Bill Gaines wasn't much to look at and he was jealous of Ed. He called me into his office and said, "You keep your Canadian SOB away from my wife." Gaines was very upset. I told him that I didn't own Ed Alton and couldn't tell him what to do, and it was none of my business. Gaines wouldn't listen to me and decided that he wasn't going to pay me for any of my pages that had been worked on by Alton. So in the end I just quit and moved into the nightclub business fulltime. I was ready to leave anyway because there wasn't enough recognition in the comics industry. I loved the idea of doing the whole comic, not just a part of it. As an entertainer you can do it your own way, no one can tell you how to do it. You sink or swim by your own performance and being a comedian did that.

Stuart: How did you decide upon the new name of Les Barker?

Bachle: I didn't decide on it. A man by the name of Dick Jackson, my agent, he decided. He changed the names of many of his acts and most of the time for good reason. It started out to be Leo Barker and I went to work on a drive-in circuit for a man named Wolf. Dick Jackson had made the deal and I signed the contract Leo Barker, because no one could figure out how to pronounce Bachle. When I got to Indiana the sign on the marquee read Les Barker. I told the people there my name was Leo, they thought the contract was signed Les Barker. It was a mistake on his part. I wanted it changed, but he kept the sign up with the error for a week. He said next week you can change it when you move on to the next performance. When I arrived at the next booking the sign was up and again it was Les Barker. It seemed they worked from trailers sent from the previous location and the name was already printed in the trailer. So, it stayed that way for the entire circuit and by the time I finished the circuit I was Les Barker, and so it has remained.

Stuart: You had a very successful nightclub and cruise ship career with your stand-up comedy act. Considering the fame and success that many of the great comic book artists achieved, do you ever regret leaving the business when you were on the brink of artistic fame?

Bachle: Not really, I enjoyed doing comics, but I much more enjoyed being an entertainer!

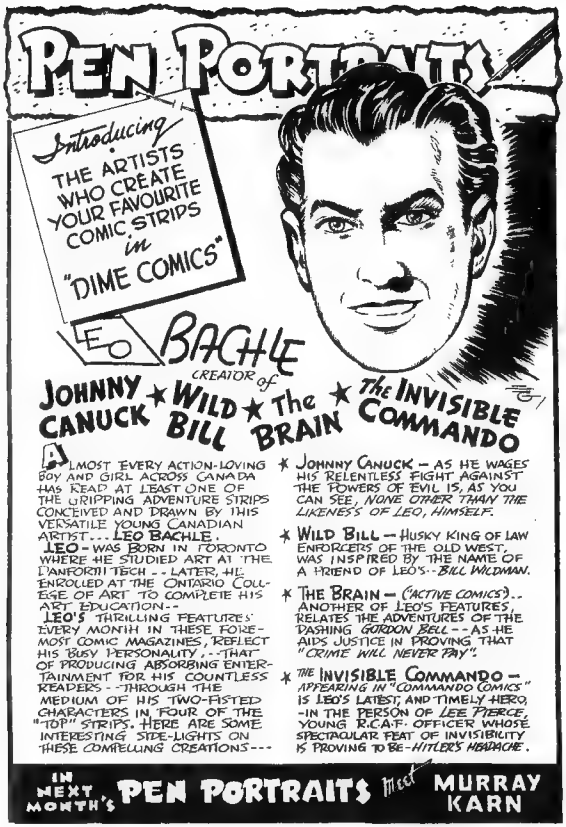
Stuart: Before you ever did any work for Bell Features you created a character called the Bat and submitted the idea to Street & Smith in New York in 1938. Your character featured a super-hero with a bat cape and hooked claws for hands. A character very similar to the Batman. This is quite a coincidence?

Bachle: My brother submitted it to Street & Smith. We always wondered about the timing, but never pursued it.

Stuart: Is it true that you invented the overhead projector?

Bachle: I put together what may have been the first overhead projector when I was about 12 years old. I'll always remember this because Johnny McGlade

SOUTHPAW
BY
IN A CORNER OF SOUTHPAW SANDER'S CAMP ..... SKIP DAVIS HOLDS A PRIVATE CONFERENCE WITH SLUG SCHOLE:
YOUR NOTHING BUT A YOKEL NOW BUT I'VE GOT A PLAN THAT'LL CRASH EVERY HEADLINE IN THE COUNTRY!
SPILL IT I'M LISTENING!
A FEW MINUTES LATER
HEY SOUTHPAW! HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO ME A FAVOUR!
I'M MANAGING A BOY THAT WOULD GIVE HIS SHIRT FOR A FEW SPARRING LESSONS FROM YOU!
SURE SKIP!..SEND HIM IN!


PEN PORTRAITS
Introducing THE ARTISTS WHO CREATE YOUR FAVOURITE COMIC STRIPS in "DIME COMICS"
LEO BACHLE
CREATOR OF
JOHNNY CANUCK ★ WILD BILL ★ The BRAIN ★ The INVISIBLE COMMANDO
ALMOST EVERY ACTION-LOVING BOY AND GIRL ACROSS CANADA HAS READ AT LEAST ONE OF THE GRIPPING ADVENTURE STRIPS CONCEIVED AND DRAWN BY THIS VERSATILE YOUNG CANADIAN ARTIST... LEO BACHLE. LEO - WAS BORN IN TORONTO WHERE HE STUDIED ART AT THE LANFORM TECH -- LATER, HE ENROLLED AT THE ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART TO COMPLETE HIS ART EDUCATION -- LEO'S THRILLING FEATURES EVERY MONTH IN THESE FOREMOST COMIC MAGAZINES, REFLECT HIS BUSY PERSONALITY, -- THAT OF PRODUCING ABSORBING ENTERTAINMENT FOR HIS COUNTLESS READERS -- THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF HIS TWO-FISTED CHARACTERS IN FOUR OF THE "TOP" STRIPS. HERE ARE SOME INTERESTING SIDE-LIGHTS ON THESE COMPELLING CREATIONS---
★ JOHNNY CANUCK - AS HE WAGES HIS RELENTLESS FIGHT AGAINST THE POWERS OF EVIL IS, AS YOU CAN SEE, NONE OTHER THAN THE LIKENESS OF LEO, HIMSELF.
★ WILD BILL - HUSKY KING OF LAW ENFORCERS OF THE OLD WEST, WAS INSPIRED BY THE NAME OF A FRIEND OF LEO'S - BILL WILDMAN.
★ THE BRAIN - ("ACTIVE COMICS").. ANOTHER OF LEO'S FEATURES, RELATES THE ADVENTURES OF THE DASHING GORDON BELL -- AS HE AIDS JUSTICE IN PROVING THAT "CRIME WILL NEVER PAY".
★ THE INVISIBLE COMMANDO - APPEARING IN "COMMANDO COMICS" IS LEO'S LATEST, AND TIMELY HERO, -IN THE PERSON OF LEE PIERCE, YOUNG R.C.A.F. OFFICER WHOSE SPECTACULAR FEAT OF INVISIBILITY IS PROVING TO BE - HITLER'S HEADACHE.
IN NEXT MONTH'S PEN PORTRAITS Meet MURRAY KARN

WITH A SINGLE BLOW JOHNNY SENDS HITLER'S GENERALS REELING THROUGH THE AIR
CRAC+
DON'T MOOF ANOTHER STEP CANUCK OR I'LL FIRE
HITLER MAD WITH FEAR SNATCHES A LUGAR FROM HIS TUNIC.
NOW TO END YOUR WORTHLESS LIFE JOHNNY CANUCK, ONCE UND FOR ALL YOU DIE!
CONFIDENTLY, DELIBERATELY HITLER AIMS HIS LUGAR AT JOHNNY CANUCK!
WILL THIS TREACHEROUS FIEND ADOLPH HITLER KILL JOHNNY?
DON'T FAIL TO READ NEXT MONTH'S GRIPPING ADVENTURE OF "JOHNNY CANUCK" APPEARING ONLY IN DIME COMICS
DON'T FAIL TO READ "THE BRAIN" NOW APPEARING ONLY IN ACTIVE COMICS
You can be JOHNNY CANUCK
• PERHAPS NOT ACTUALLY - BUT IT'S EASY TO ACQUIRE SOME OF HIS SECRETS. WRITE LETTERS IN THE DARK AND THRILL YOUR FRIENDS WITH THE CANUCK PENCIL LIGHT!
YES MY ALBRIGHT COMBINATION PENCIL AND FLASH LIGHT GET ME ONE OF MANY A DARK CORNER - BE THE FIRST TO OWN ONE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD
IT'S FINE TO WRITE WITH IN THE DARK AND HANDY AT NIGHT!
IT'S SWELL! AN AUTOMATIC PENCIL THAT LIGHTS UP!
LIGHTS UP HERE
SEND $1.00 TO TRANS-CANADA MAIL ORDER CO. 169 YORK ST TORONTO ONT. AND YOUR ALBRIGHT WILL BE MAILED PREPAID

went to the school with me to demonstrate it and it didn't work. I had it working at my house, but couldn't make it work at school and to this day we laugh about it. Over the years I improved on it and got it working very good and used it in my art. Then later I saw one being made by a company that was better still and I started using it. I never tried to patent my projector because I just saw it as my tool, my personal toy.

Stuart: You've been an entertainer for over fifty years. Did you ever do any TV or movie work?

Bachle: Yes, I was in a few movies and lots of commercials, such as the Maxwell House Coffee Taster, the Bank President for Schick Razor Blades, the Scientist for Johnson Wax and the Train Conductor in the Elax commercials. I played the lead part in the film *125 Rooms of Comfort*. But most of my entertaining was of the nightclub variety and I spent many years with my wife entertaining on cruise ships. We spent over seven years on the *SS Norway*.

Stuart: Les, I'd like to thank you for talking to me. It's been a thrill to spend time with one of the great comic book artists of the Golden Age.

Bachle: It's been a pleasure!

Additional sources for this article: The Great Canadian Comic Books, Guardians of the North *and the Grand Comics Database.*

That Wonderful Year

by Michelle Nolan

Moderately Wonderful

Without a doubt, the most successful comic book title in that wonderful year 1957 was *Showcase*. It surely didn't sell the most issues, of course, but it was definitely the most intriguing.

The three features that occupied *Showcase*'s bimonthly run that year all struck financial gold—eventually—when the *Challengers of the Unknown*, *The Flash* and *Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane* all went on to long, glorious Silver Age runs. Yet DC's revolutionary title for character tryouts also produced one heck of an agonizing wait for youngsters who were captivated by The Flash.

When you were a kid, remember how an hour could seem endless, particularly if it was the last hour of the school day or the first hour in the dentist's chair? Well, for those of us who were there, ever faithfully showing up on one "new comic day" after another at the local drugstore, waiting for The Flash to reappear was a lot like that.

It was bad enough that we had to wait eight months between The Flash's imaginative reincarnation in *Showcase* #4 (Sep/Oct 1956) and his second appearance in #8 (May/Jun 1957). With no connection between fans and publishers in that wonderful year, we could only conclude by the end of 1957 that we might never see the Scarlet Speedster again. Was he to be just a quick blip on the comic book radar?

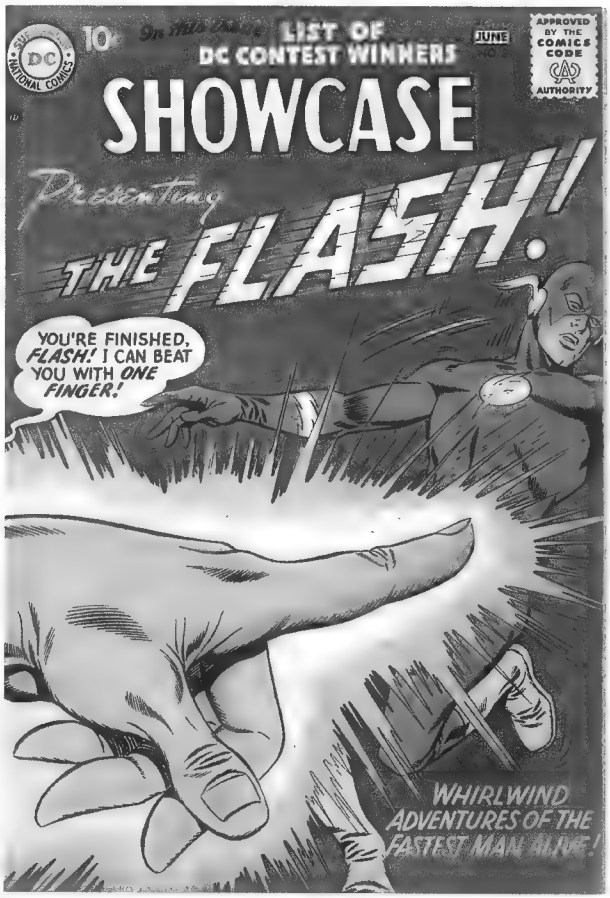
That's what I remember best about that maybe not-so-wonderful year—the fear that one of my favorite new characters would not return. Ten long months—an eternity when you're nine years old—went by before The Flash returned in *Showcase* #13 (Mar/Apr 1958) and #14 (May/Jun). DC then tortured us with another nine-month wait until *The Flash* resumed regular publication with #105 (Feb/Mar 1959).

In other words, over a period of two and one-half years, we had to make do with a grand total of eight stories about The Flash, albeit cool full-length adventures, in four *Showcase* appearances. You had to be there to appreciate the frustration. Of course, there were hundreds of other comics to examine—but nothing, absolutely nothing, quite like The Flash.

Showcase was also responsible for my other best memories of that wonderful year 1957, though technically I first saw the *Challengers of the Unknown* when I picked up #6 (Jan/Feb 1957) during the Christmas shopping season in 1956. It was also wonderful to see Lois Lane appear in full-length stories for the first time in *Showcase* #9 and 10 in 1957.

It was also late in 1956 that I got my first surprise of comic collecting for 1957, when I spotted *Blackhawk* #108 (Jan) with a DC symbol instead of a Quality Comics logo. I had no idea I would never again see a Quality comic on the racks, but instead would have to hunt them down forever as back issues. I'm still hunting!

But while *Blackhawk* was far more important to me at the time, DC probably made more money by also picking up *G.I. Combat* and *Heart Throbs* from Quality, both classic long-running genre books with great generic titles.



There was another heroic surprise in 1957, when The Phantom showed up in *Harvey Hits* #1 (Sep), followed by seven more appearances in that title through 1961 (eight of the first 48 issues featured

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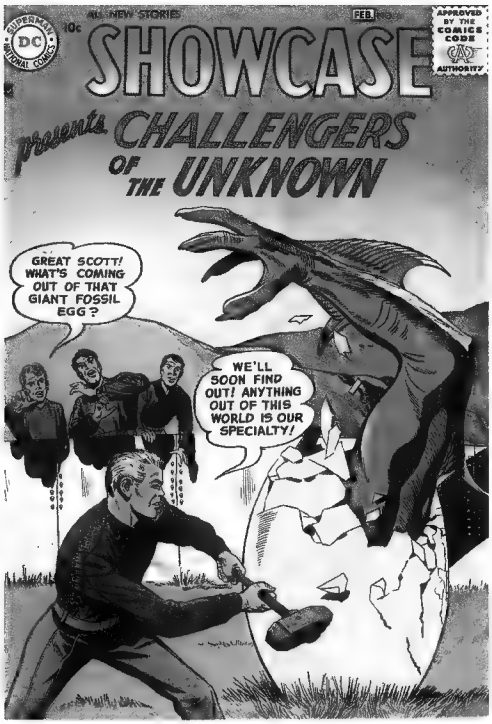
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SHOWCASE
presents CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
GREAT SCOTT! WHAT'S COMING OUT OF THAT GIANT FOSSIL EGG?
WE'LL SOON FIND OUT! ANYTHING OUT OF THIS WORLD IS OUR SPECIALTY!

The Phantom). The Ghost Who Walks had been out of comic books for more than five years, since his previous appearance in *Harvey Comic Hits* in #56 in 1952. I loved The Phantom so much—he has been in the funny pages since 1936 and is one of the few remaining comic-strip heroes—that I couldn't figure out why he was ever out of the comic books.

What else happened in 1957? To be blunt, not much. There were dozens of long-established titles, many of them gems from Dell and DC, but there were few surprises or historic developments. By now, just about everyone in fandom has heard of the Atlas/Marvel distribution implosion, which resulted in dozens of 1957 title cancellations. By the time the pulp dust cleared, the company was temporarily limited to publishing eight issues per month beginning with those dated November 1957, because the DC-connected Independent News Company had agreed to take over Marvel's distribution, with severe limitations.

As a result of the implosion, that was the year the total production of newsstand comic books tumbled below 2,000 issues for the first time since 1948. There were 1,909 comics published with 1957 dates, give or take a couple that may be giveaways or may not exist (thanks to Dan Stevenson's massive issue-by-issue database).

It was no surprise when the end of the two-year-long Davy Crockett craze resulted in the last Crocket comics, Charlton's *Davy Crocket* #8 and *Wild Western* #6, both Jan 1957.

On the other hand, it was a little surprising when Harvey Comics popped up with three odd issues dated Sep 1957 of what turned out to be short-lived mystery titles—*The Man in Black*, *Black Cat Mystic* and *Alarming Tales*. I devoured them all because they were so different from their competition, especially Bob Powell's moody *Man in Black*.

It was also the year that the better half of the potted palm set finally stopped swinging from the vines for a good many years. Charlton's *Nyoka the Jungle Girl*, so successful under the Fawcett banner in the 1940s and early '50s, last appeared in #22 (Nov 1957), while Marvel's *Lorna the Jungle Girl* and *Jann of the Jungle* were victims of the implosion. They might not have survived as long as they did were it not for the fondly remembered 26-episode syndicated *Sheena* television show originally released during the 1956-57 season.

G.I. Joe, the last and by far the most successful Ziff-Davis comic book, struggled to three final issues in 1957 before expiring with #51 (Jul). The name would become much bigger 25 years later in the comics when Marvel popularized Hasbro's immortal toy character.

Perhaps the weirdest comic to appear in 1957 was the one-shot *Jughead's Folly* from Archie Publications, a riff on Elvis Presley. Now it's a scarce, highly sought-after collectible.

No survey of 1957 distinctions would be complete without noting the last issues of DC's *Dodo and the Frog* (#92), *Nutsy Squirrel* (#72) and *Raccoon Kids* (#64), all dated November. Three years earlier, the company converted the titles of the long-running *Funny Stuff*, *Funny Folks* and Movietown's *Animal Antics* titles, respectively, to their featured characters, but the new logos apparently didn't boost sales enough.

A wonderful year? Only in retrospect.

John Cullen Murphy 1919-2004

John Cullen Murphy, the American artist and illustrator, has died at 85 in Greenwich, Connecticut. A protégé of Norman Rockwell, Murphy drew the weekly historical adventure strip *Prince Valiant*, still serialized in color in 300 Sunday papers.

This sweeping epic of heroic realism and romance chronicles the fortunes of a hot-blooded Norse prince in fifth century Britain, from his adolescent feats of chivalry to responsibility, marriage and fatherhood. Val, as he is often called, is appointed one of King Arthur's Knights of the Round Table and weds Aleta, Queen of the Misty Isles.

Syndicated worldwide and adapted to the big screen in 1954 and 1997, *Prince Valiant's* millions of admirers included the Duke of Windsor, formerly Edward VIII. Filling a full-color broadsheet page, the feature was created in 1937 by Canadian Hal Foster (1892-1982). His intricate tableaux, uncluttered by any speech balloons, set the high standard of classical draughtsmanship that Murphy would ably maintain, first in 1970 as Foster's assistant, and then as his personal choice to be his artistic successor.

Murphy began signing *Prince Valiant* from May 23, 1971, although he continued to work closely with Foster, who, while retired from drawing, still wrote most of the stories and provided him with sketched layouts and color guides. After Foster sold his creation to King Features Syndicate in 1979, their collaboration ended with the February 10; 1980 episode.

From then on, the production of *Prince Valiant* became something of a family business. One of Murphy's sons, Cullen, a medieval history graduate and currently managing editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, took over writing the thoroughly researched storylines. Murphy's daughter, Mairead Nash, known as Meg, has also been assisting her father over the last ten years with the lettering and coloring.

Born in New York City, John Cullen Murphy grew up in Chicago, where aged nine he started Saturday art classes at the Art Institute. Moving to New Rochelle, New York, the freckle-faced 15-year-old was spotted playing baseball by a neighbor, Norman Rockwell, who asked him to pose for one of his *Saturday Evening Post* covers. The experience confirmed the teenager's passion to become an illustrator himself. With Rockwell as his mentor, he won a scholarship to New York's Phoenix Art Institute and later studied at the Art Students League under anatomist George Bridgman.

From boxing match advertisements for Madison Square Garden to covers for *Liberty* and other magazines, Murphy's illustration career got off to a promising start, before he joined the Army in 1940. While serving in the Pacific in infantry and anti-aircraft units, for which he was awarded a Bronze Star, Murphy painted portraits of military personnel, including General Douglas MacArthur, and drew scenes of Japanese life for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Discharged in 1946, Murphy soon returned to illustration, making his name by contributing covers and interior artwork to *Esquire*, *Collier's*, *Look* and other magazines. In 1949, writer Elliot Caplin approached Murphy to draw his new realistic boxing strip. Starting as a daily strip in 1950, and adding a larger Sunday version from 1952, *Big Ben Bolt* starred a heavyweight boxer with a college degree, who wins the world title but is forced to retire due to an eye injury and becomes a sports journalist/detective. Murphy drew the serial, later with the help of assistants, until its conclusion in 1978.

But it was *Prince Valiant* that brought him the greatest acclaim worldwide; the entire run up until 1980 has now been reprinted by Fantagraphics Books and others in a multi-lingual, 50-volume set. Murphy was a winner of the National Cartoonists Society's award for Best Story Strip no less than six times. He illustrated a fresh episode every week for thirty-four years, an epic achievement in itself, lasting only about one year short of the total amount which Foster had drawn. Earlier this year, Murphy retired and in turn entrusted Val's Singing Sword to artist Gary Gianni, to steer the future of this never-ending Arthurian legend.

Murphy is survived by his wife, his brother, three sons, five daughters, eighteen grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

John Cullen Murphy, artist and comic strip illustrator: born May 3, 1919; died July 2, 2004.

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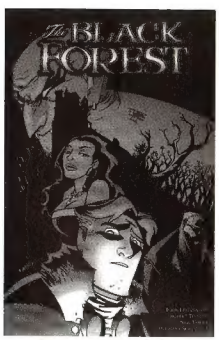
Book Review

by Steve Kronenberg

THE BLACK FOREST, by Todd Livingston and Robert Tinnell, Illustrated by Neil Vokes (Image Comics: March 2004)

You don't have to love classic horror films to enjoy *The Black Forest*—but it does help! This imaginative, thoroughly enjoyable take on old-time monsterdom blends furious, nearly unstoppable action with several denizens of the dark that are familiar to all movie lovers. The plot line itself is bold and imaginative. The book's hero is Captain Jack Shannon, a heroic World War I flying ace, who is asked by his commanding officers to parachute into Germany's forbidden Black Forest and investigate some diabolic doings perpetrated by the Kaiser's forces. Shannon is joined in this endeavor by Archibald Caldwell, himself a mystic and expert on the occult, who was working for the Allied forces. Their foray into the forbidden zone leads them to a sinister project by the Germans to revive the corpses of dead soldiers killed in battle and use them as indestructible weapons against the Allies. The Black Forest itself is depicted as a hotbed of occult activity: "If Hell were a machine the Black Forest would be its battery." Spearheading the twisted project is the sinister Dr. Avery Dye, also an expert on the occult, who resides in the haunted Castle of Shadows deep in the Black Forest. It seems he and Caldwell go way back in their diabolics. Dye is determined to use the resurrected corpses to create an un-dead army of invincible warriors. He is assisted by a comely blond named Ilsa, who also has a way with martial arts, and the relentlessly cruel Major Kurt Taggen, who is Dye's right-hand man. Livingston and Tinnell quickly reveal that Taggen also has a secret weapon of his own that is as deadly as anything Dye is attempting to create. The plot line also reveals, in flashbacks, that the Germans have stumbled upon the frozen body of none other than the Frankenstein Monster, whom Dye revives to do his bidding and massacre French soldiers. Dye seeks to perfect his resurrection technique by locating the notes of Dr. Victor Frankenstein. Clearly, Livingston and Tinnell are blending in themes from several Universal horror classics of the 1930s and 1940s, including all three 1930s *Frankenstein* films, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1943), and even *The Black Cat* (1934)—the film which first teamed Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi. Throw in Shannon's encounter with Count Orlok, the monstrous vampire of F. W. Murnau's classic *Nosferatu* (1922), and a monstrous melee at the climax, and you have a monster rally that would thrill even the most jaded horror film fan.



But the book isn't just for horror film fans. Abundant plot twists keep the ride extremely interesting, and there is some rousing wartime action that complements the ongoing monster mash. Robert Tinnell, who co-authored the book, has injected his love for classic and contemporary horror films into the plot line, and with Livingston ingeniously reshapes the Frankenstein-vampire-werewolf-mad doctor myths into a more modern, but no less Gothic setting. Tinnell himself is a veteran director of supernatural films, and his magnum opus, *Frankenstein and Me*, is a superb and imaginative retake on the Frankenstein legend.

Neil Vokes's artwork ably abets the Tinnell/Livingston storyline. Throughout the book, Vokes employs a black and white, chiaroscuro style reminiscent not only of the old movies that the book honors, but also of the vintage James Warren horror comics *Eerie* and *Creepy*. Early in the book, Vokes delivers some chaotic war imagery of poison gas and exploding grenades, crescendoing in an image of the Frankenstein Monster sweeping through the carnage. Vokes also paints the book in incessant darkness, creating a Gothic mood that accentuates the book's old-fashioned sense of heroics and diabolics. An aerial dogfight, amidst crackling lightning, thunder, and whizzing bullets, is especially well done, with both planes lighting up the night sky with gunfire before they crash into a church. In addition, Vokes's scenes of the Frankenstein Monster walking through the dark, charred battlefields by night are extremely atmospheric. And watch for the ferocious scene in which Shannon shoots down some German planes, and then parachutes out with Caldwell into the depths of the Black Forest. On a movie screen, such a scene would rival anything from the Indiana Jones trilogy. Fans of more contemporary horror will also enjoy the scene in which Dye reanimates a disfigured cadaver, in a scene reminiscent of the 1985 splatter classic, *Re-Animator*. And Vokes's touch for Gothic atmospherics is best seen in his rendering of Castle Frankenstein, surrounded by snowy mountains and gnarled trees, matching the dark, Gothic mood of Universal's black and white classics.

The only nit to pick here is Vokes's depiction of the heroic Jack Shannon. Shannon, the hotshot, courageous flying ace is drawn cartoonishly and in such a juvenile manner that, at times, he resembles a 13 year old boy! It's understood that Shannon is young, but he looks even more youthful than many of the 17 year old boys who lied about their age to enlist in the army. By contrast, Major Taggen is drawn effectively and hauntingly: Vokes depicts him as a mad, wide-eyed monster (which is clearly not far from the truth!). Vokes's rendering of the Frankenstein Monster adopts some of the trademarked look used on Boris Karloff in the Universal classics, but remains unique in its own way. The werewolves, too, are appropriately ferocious looking. In fact, watch for the scene in which Shannon and Caldwell are attacked by German planes, with the onslaught symbolized by the huge face of a terrifying werewolf implanted in the sky!

Compared to the imaginative and fascinating storyline, and Vokes's supremely Gothic touches, his juvenile renderings of Jack Shannon are minute indeed. Admission to this monster rally is essential for comics and horror fans alike.

THE WORKS OF A MASTER...

The Kelly Freas Collection

He has been hailed as the most popular and influential of all science-fiction artists...

"Timekeeper," Fantasy and Science Fiction, January, 1990.

"Godiva Goblin" from the Xanth Calendar, based on the novels of Piers Anthony.

...his artwork has adorned book covers, record jackets, magazines,

even the shoulder patch for the crew of Skylab 1...

"The Martians," Frontispiece for the 1994 Easton Press Edition of Kim Stanley Robinson's novel.

"Scribe," Marion Zimmer Bradley's Fantasy Magazine, Winter, 1990.

...and now, his artwork can be yours.

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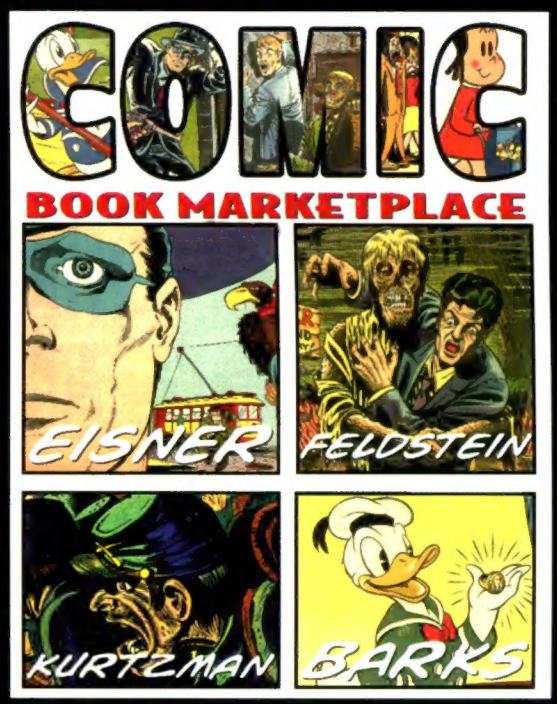
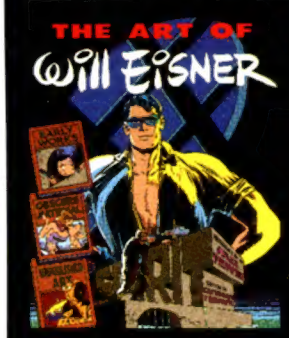
COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #115

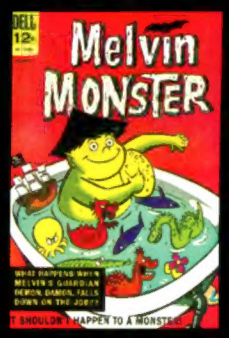


Most comic books are a collaborative creation of many minds. The concept, the writing, the layout, the penciling, the inking and the lettering can involve the talents of many people. But there were a few creators of comic books, like Will Eisner, Carl Barks, Al Feldstein, Harvey Kurtzman and John Stanley, who produced their works as solo efforts. These are the auteurs of comics. *CBM* #115 takes a look at these giants.

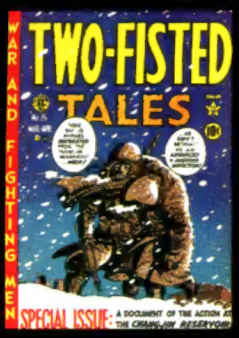


Michael Kronenberg Interviews comic book legend Will Eisner.

Will Murray delves into author Charles Spain Verral.

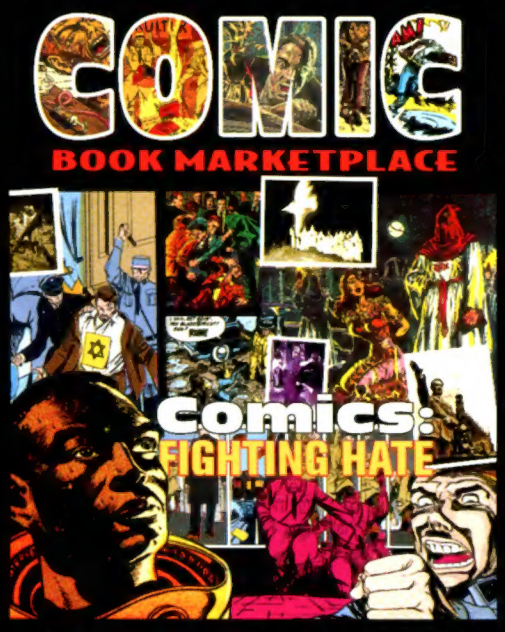


Pat Calhoun on John Stanley.



Steve Ringgenberg explores the diverse career of Harvey Kurtzman.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #116



In *Comic Book Marketplace* #116 we take a look at a serious topic: First, how Jews created the comic book in the first place, and then, how crusading publishers like William M. Gaines used this medium to fight against racism and anti-Semitism in stories like "Judgment Day," "Master Race" and the regular series of "preachies" which appeared in *Shock SuspenStories* in the early 1950s.

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE #117

In *Comic Book Marketplace* #116 we started an important three-part series about "How the Jews Created the Comic Book Industry" by Arie Kaplan. That issue examined creators of the Golden Age. In *CBM* #117 we continue with Part II of this series by looking at Silver Age creators like Julius Schwartz, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby.